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Engaging Past and Future on a Community Supported Agriculture Farm

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Abstract

The focus of this dissertation is Orchard Hill Farm, an organic, draft horse-powered Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm located on the outskirts of Sparta, Ontario. This site provides a unique opportunity to study a singular example of what is termed alternative or “civic” agriculture. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted from August 2013 to August 2014, this study considers the everyday lived experience and perspectives of the owners, agricultural apprentices, and CSA members at this farm, going beyond idealized descriptions of CSAs and critically assessing how culturally-specific constructions of place, rurality, authenticity, etc., mediate the experiences of CSA members. This qualitative study also considers the nature of human, human-animal, and human-environment relations and interdependencies that seems to be central to the success of this CSA, while exploring the potential and limitations of the CSA model itself and what Heather Paxson has called a “post-pastoral” approach to agriculture. One of the important theses of this study is that, for CSA members, the farm is a meaningful place where they may experience a nostalgic “re-enchantment” through a perceived closeness to food, farmer, and farm. Working in close connection with the land and the non-human animals that inhabit it, farmers (and apprentices) express a commitment to sustainable practices that derives from their own future-oriented “enchantment” with the earth and what it produces. This sets the stage for the CSA clients to become more attuned to the idea of a “civic”-minded agriculture and more committed to an economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable food system.

Keywords: agriculture, alternative agriculture, civic agriculture, CSA, organic, local,

industrial agriculture, human/animal relations

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Introduction

In the spring of 1999, I was invited, along with my newborn infant and nine year-old son, to an informal get-together with a group of secular homeschoolers in a home in Port Stanley, Ontario. Although I don't recall the particulars now, I do remember that it was here that several people told me about their membership in a local Community Supported Agriculture garden. I had never heard of the concept of a CSA at the time but found it quite intriguing. In this system, consumers pay in advance for a share of a farm's harvest. For the farmer, this ensures a guaranteed market for their produce, and for consumers, the arrangement provides access to fresh and local food. Even though at the time several hundred dollars for the pre-paid season seemed to be a stretch for our small household economy, my husband and I decided to sign up and see what it was all about. We remained members until 2017, as our children grew to adulthood and the gospel of "local food" became an economic and cultural force to be reckoned with.

I considered Orchard Hill Farm a very special place from the beginning of my involvement there but it took me time to recognize that its owners, Martha and Ken Laing, were not only working to earn their living on their farm; their work was a way of living. Upon closer observation it became apparent to me that their efforts at conducting their daily lives in a manner that aligned with their beliefs had repercussions far beyond the personal. I began to see that their farm project touched landscape and its living

inhabitants in myriad ways and at myriad levels, from the soil itself to global food politics. Pursuing anthropological studies, I became interested in the cultural values being conveyed and expressed by various actors here through what was, when all is said and done, still a market exchange (albeit an ‘alternative’ one). At Orchard Hill Farm, I found that food is - as it is everywhere – not only a source of but also a medium of cultural and social transformation. This ethnographically grounded work explores one approach to how food can be produced and sold —a unique and successful approach that involves craft, uncertainties, tensions, and collaborations on intimate scales. It also explores what this approach means to those who participate, contesting simplified understandings of who is involved in food movements, and for what reasons, and questioning portrayals of Community Supported Agriculture as an idealized model.

A quick scan of foodstuffs in the supermarket reveals the graphic use of markers that signal a connection of the food on display to a somewhat idyllic vision of the countryside. Dairy products marketed by Lactantia, for example, depict cows in green fields, a farmhouse and traditional barn, and a father/farmer and son walking towards the “home” (for example, see masthead at Lactantia.ca). In fact, it is hard to imagine these homogenous products, packaged in plastic or aluminized paper, coming from such idyllic scenes. And of course they do not: they are produced at large scales with industrial machinery in circumstances that do not at all resemble what we see in the picture. While these products can only allude to small-scale farms, Orchard Hill actually *is* a small, family-run operation which CSA members can experience at various levels. In interviews with CSA members at Orchard Hill, people spoke to me about a connection to food,

farmer, and farm that was sustained by a sense of what I will call “re-enchantment” with things that, for them, seemed to be missing in the industrial food system.

In *The Life of Cheese: Crafting Food and Value in America* (2013), Heather Paxson notes how anthropological research has shown that food plays a role in creating a sense of identity, well-being, and morality (4). There is another aspect of Paxson's study that is relevant for the chapters that follow here; what she refers to as the “post-pastoral ethos.” Briefly, the post-pastoral ethos implies an intensive, small-scale approach to land that does not involve a return to an imagined golden (or pastoral) age. In other words, farmers such as Martha and Ken at Orchard Hill Farm use techniques (such as farming with draft animals) that not long ago seemed anachronistic, because to them, and increasingly to others, they make sense as strategies for sustainable food systems in the present. As we will see, the logic behind the working methods at Orchard Hill are based on sound scientific information and experience with farming this particular acreage for many years. At Orchard Hill Farm certain traditional approaches, reconfigured to conform with current knowledge, make sense today, even if they seem to go against established practices of the larger industrial food system. The strong sense of being in a relationship with place, humans, non-human animals, and other living things that I witnessed on this farm, is what I will later refer to as “working with”, rather than “working against” “nature”. “Working with” on this farm entails a “dance of relating” (Haraway 2002) with living soil, companion animals, students of sustainable farming, and a community of members with varying degrees of connection to and understanding of the project. This concept is closely related to Paxson’s notion of the post-pastoral, with its emphasis on relationship and interdependency, but whereas her study concentrated on

the production of cheese, here I will explore production and consumption at Orchard Hill, showing how the two are inextricably linked. My investigation of this farm highlights the “working with” mentioned above but also the sense of connection or closeness that people experience with food, farmer, and farm.

In *World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption* (1978), Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood suggested that consumption is not merely an economic transaction centred on objects, but rather a process or series of rituals embedded in the network of collective and individual meaning-making that constitutes the social realm. Consumers construct meaning through the very act of consuming, using goods to create “an intelligible universe” (Douglas and Isherwood 1996:ix). Furthermore, the authors suggest that “[g]oods are neutral, their uses are social; they can be used as fences or bridges” (1996:xv). Their symbolism is as important as the immediate material purposes to which they are put.

The idea that material goods are also symbolic is important for understanding the recent expansion of the organic food industry, the growing popularity of Community Supported Agriculture, and other practices that are encompassed by what Thomas A. Lyson calls “civic agriculture” (2004). Food is not merely a material necessity, but is also helps to build the “fences and bridges” mentioned above.

That consumption plays an important role in defining individual and collective identity has been reiterated by other anthropologists and sociologists –Pierre Bourdieu is perhaps one of the more well-known scholars to have broached this subject in texts such as *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1985) and *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993). One currently practicing anthropologist who has dedicated

much of his career to the topic of consumption is Daniel Miller. For Miller, consumption is always implicated with production; that is, consumers are not mere passive purchasers of what producers market; rather, through their agency, consumers have an impact on what is produced (see Miller 1987; Miller 1995; Miller 1997; Miller, Jackson, Thrift, Holbrook, and Rowlands 1998; Miller 2012). Furthermore, Miller makes a distinction between “pure capitalism” (how it might be thought about technocratically and imposed on a locale) and “organic capitalism” (how it is enacted when local conditions are taken into account) that helps us understand how consumers and producers imagine, or negotiate, the dichotomy between industrial and artisanal agricultural production, and how the industrial food system and alternative forms of agriculture coexist as practices that are in tension with each other, but in certain ways also complement each other and sometimes even intersect.

The search for “better” food has led to a variety of consumer and producer trends in the past several decades. Concerns about the composition of foodstuffs, (for example, gluten and the ensuing gluten-free movement), and the issue of food sovereignty have stimulated the growth of farmer's markets, the large scale production of organic food, and projects of alternative agriculture in North America. Behind these trends are efforts to construct a “civic agriculture” in opposition to an “industrial agriculture” of scale that is driven primarily by profits (Lyson 2004:61). I found that at Orchard Hill Farm, their project is remarkably consistent with Lyson’s definition of “civic agriculture”, demonstrating a “commitment to an economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable system of food production” in which community problem-solving serves as a foundation, as opposed to individual competition (2004:63-64).

Although I had been involved as a CSA member since the year 1999, I undertook the research for this study from August 2013 to August 2014, spanning a full farming cycle and two different groups of farm apprentices. In my research I have employed anthropological methodologies, including participant observation, historical research, and semi-structured and informal interviews with study participants (farmers, apprentices, and clients). I have used these various tools to explore the experiences, motivations and perceptions of different actors involved with the farm and to assess how their various goals are pursued in day-to-day activities connected with the farm's operation. During my research period I had the opportunity to be involved in farm-related activities such as maintenance of crops (i.e., *weeding!*), harvesting, and preparing produce for weekly pick-ups, and to attend events on the farm such as member pot-lucks. I also attended various other events on and off the farm, including two day-long regional farming apprentice seminars, and a lecture on agricultural practice given by Ken. These activities brought me into contact with the owners, the apprentices, the clientele and with other people who spend time on the farm.

While I acknowledge the limits of working from a single case study in an attempt to say something about CSAs in general, the fact that this is a successful iteration of the CSA model makes it worthy of in-depth investigation. And while I am clearly an “insider” taking on an anthropological role, it is precisely my long-term involvement at this farm that has allowed a depth of ethnographic detail and a view across time to be incorporated into this study. I also acknowledge here that, because the people interviewed for this study were necessarily members of the CSA (that is people who had *chosen* to participate as clients or apprentices on the farm), the views I recorded understandably

tended to have positive bias in favour of the farm's project and its underlying goals.

I will make a brief note here about demographic aspects of my research population. The people involved with the CSA whom I observed, conversed with, and interacted with during this study, tended to be Canadian-born, over 30 years of age, and with post-secondary education. A list of some of their professions include: engineer, elementary and high school teacher, librarian, police, artist, social worker, contractor, restaurateur, and health professional. Of the 20 members with whom I conducted in-depth interviews, all but six were born and raised in Canada, and all but one had post-secondary education. Four were retired, nineteen were married –this included nine couples with dependent children, one same-sex couple without dependents, and two people who were separated, with older children living in their home. Among five farming apprentices interviewed, two were American, two Canadian-born, and one was a dual Canadian-South American citizen. All were under 30 years of age, and all but one had post-secondary education related to farming and agriculture. Notably, while I admittedly did not meet every CSA member, I also did not encounter any “visible minorities” among either members or apprentices at this farm, something which could be followed up with more research on CSAs in the Canadian context.¹

In concern for the privacy of the clients and apprentices interviewed for this study, I have chosen to employ pseudonyms throughout this work, although I have used the actual names of the farm and its owners, information which is publicly known and advertised.

In the chapters that follow I will be examining how the two concepts of “re-

¹ For more information related to this aspect of contemporary food activism see Julie Guthman (2008) “If They Only Knew”: Color Blindness and Universalism in California Alternative Food Institutions or Antonio Roman-Alcalá (2015) Concerning the Unbearable Whiteness of Urban Farming.

enchantment” and “working with” help us understand how the farmers and members at Orchard Hill approach this particular farm and the food it produces. I draw from Weber’s idea of the “disenchantment of the world” brought about by modernity (2004:30) to identify a “re-enchantment” that consumers experience as they bring values and idealized understandings of locality and rurality to the CSA. On the farmers’ part, I identify an effort to “work with” soil, animals, and people that is concerned with creating connections between the elements of production here, and that is linked to what geographer Agatha Herman has called the “enchantment” of farming” (2005:109). It is important to note that I distinguish between “re-enchantment”, which is tied to a sense of “loss”, as described by Weber above, and “enchantment”. Both notions share a sense of “wonder” but the first suggests a pastoralism that looks back to something lost, while the second points to a forward-looking, post-pastoral engagement with agriculture. In very general terms, the distinction between “re-enchantment” and “enchantment” follows a divide between consumers and farmers here. However, while members may arrive with pre-conceptions about an agricultural past, their involvement at the farm makes *possible* a shift from romanticized notions of rural life to understandings of a future-oriented and civic-minded agriculture. I will highlight how such an agricultural practice can (or cannot) inform models for the industrial food system; and, perhaps more importantly, suggest that an agricultural ethics based on “working with” (the land, people, and non-human animals) has important consequences for broader environmental concerns.

I will note here that throughout this dissertation the notion of *scale* is understood as a relational and comparative term (it denotes a comparison between two or more “objects”). Scale is closely connected to issues of size or distance, particularly when

several alternatives are considered side-by-side. In my field work at Orchard Hill, scale emerged in relation to three fundamental issues: 1) production (industrial agriculture as “big,” vs. alternative agriculture as “small”), 2) spatial proximity (geographical closeness or the “local”– vs. distance), and 3) social connections (familiarity vs. anonymity). Time and again, Orchard Hill members, apprentices, and farmers referred to the value of their experience at the farm –and the value of the farm itself as an operation– by referring to notions of scale in one or more of the senses listed above, either explicitly or implicitly. In very rough terms, scale was often constructed by opposing *big* to *small*, *far* to *close*, *anonymous* to *known*.²

In the first section of Chapter 1, I explore agriculture in Southwestern Ontario in the last century as it paralleled the story of the mechanization and industrialization of the wider food system. The practices and methods produced by a mainstream narrative of “progress” constitute a backdrop against which both conventional farming and the varied practices of “alternative” food initiatives need to be viewed. In the second section I introduce the idea of “civic agriculture”, the emergence of the CSA model, and its unique expression at Orchard Hill Farm.

Chapter 2 considers how the farm is imagined and experienced by its consumers, owners and apprentices. The first section takes a brief look at the history and imaginings associated with the landscape around Orchard Hill. The second section discusses how perceptions of this small-scale approach to production and the ways people imagine the farm can foster “re-enchantment” or what participants consider meaningful interactions. In the last section, I provide some ethnographic examples of how members related their

² Although at Orchard Hill scale was consistently used to ascribe positive value to “small” and “close,” I am using it here as a conceptual tool that helped me understand how people spoke about the farm and their experiences there; I am not endorsing a simplistic view that small=good and big=bad.

experiences at Orchard Hill Farm in ways that highlighted the import of connections to farmers, other people, food, soil, animals, or with their own sense of well-being and spirituality.

In Chapter 3, I explore three important notions that are linked to how many Orchard Hill members experience the farm: the “local”, community, and trust. I argue that the small scale of production on which Orchard Hill Farm operates plays an important role in how the members perceive the food that they receive, and in the sense of “re-enchantment” which they experience.

Chapter 4 describes how the farmers at Orchard Hill “*work with*” people, animals, and soil. In the first section I discuss the idea of the “post-pastoral ethos” (Paxson 2013) which I observed in action there. The second section discusses the creation of a living “soil habitat” which is foundational to producing high quality organic food on this farm. A third section explores not just the centrality of the draft horses in the day-to-day workings of this farm, but the responsive relationship involved in working with them. A fourth section describes the structure of a “typical” day during the growing season in order to illustrate how this CSA is also about working with people in supportive relationships. This chapter also highlights how, for the farmers, the embodied experience of farming in this post-pastoral manner results in their own state of “enchantment” with a way of life that is more than a “lifestyle”, as one apprentice told me: “You can’t take it off,” he said.

Chapter 5 begins by describing a visit to the Sparta Meeting House, an important site for understanding Martha and Ken’s motivations for operating Orchard Hill Farm in a manner that involves respect for others and responsibility for their own actions. I

conclude by briefly discussing the strengths and problems of this particular expression of the CSA model and, in a brief epilogue, point out changes that had occurred after my study ended.

Chapter 1

CSA in the Southwestern Ontario Context

1.1 The Southwestern Ontario Context and The Emergence of Large-scale Agriculture

The story of agriculture in Southwestern Ontario in the last century parallels the story of the mechanization and industrialization of the national and continental food system. This process has had broad effects on the size and scope of the average farm and on the labour needed to work the land. The interlocking of practices and methods produced by a mainstream narrative of ‘progress’ constitute a backdrop against which both conventional farming and the varied practices of “alternative” food initiatives must be placed. The unfolding of modernity in the countryside brought about a form of farming driven by specific approaches to resources, efficiency, profitability and abundance. In turn, the last several decades have witnessed the growth of forms of agriculture and marketing driven by consumer demand for locally grown, pesticide-free, environmentally sustainable food. In opposition to ‘big agriculture’, the perceived goal of alternative food initiatives has been to achieve a more ‘human’ (and even ‘intimate’) scale of environmentally sustainable farming that has its own scientific rationale, as well as its own productive and profitable possibilities.

The Impact of European Settler Activity on the Southern Ontario Landscape

Long before the arrival of Europeans, the sheer physical presence of the Great Lakes helped to shape the lives of pre-colonial inhabitants of Southwestern Ontario. In a reminder of early global connections, both the Hurons and the Iroquois confederacy employed a complex network of rivers and waterways for trade (Martin 1988:16). These waterways were used for two centuries of fur trade and also directed the spread of European settlement, simply because they provided the only “easy access to the new lands” and were the most efficient and accessible communication routes (1988:16).

The parcelling of land in Southwestern Ontario today is the direct product of a more aggressive process of European colonization in the early nineteenth century, and from the beginning of this process, the most crucial influence on Ontario’s rural landscape was the government itself. From the outset, the government exerted control of the settlement process and legal title was rarely obtained through the mere act of “squatting” (Blake and Greenhill 1969:6). The majority of land titles stemmed from Crown grants that carried with them the obligation for a settler to “occupy and improve” (6). Prior to 1780, this implied building a house and clearing land – survival was really still the main goal. After 1798, to be recognized as a “freeholder” (who could then vote) the obligations were more specific: settlers were expected to build and occupy a 20' x 16' house within a year, and clear, fence, and plant 5 acres. They were also responsible for the “clearing, chopping, brushing, and burning of half the road allowance in front of their holding” within two years (1969:6). At this point, nation-building began in earnest. So, although it may have started gradually with the first settlers and the first small clearings, the overall pattern of

growth that resulted was definitely not haphazard, nor was it defined by the whim of individual settlers (1969:5). Most importantly, private purchase of native land was illegal. Land that was “secured” from the natives by the government was rarely offered for settlement before it was surveyed into townships, concessions and lots a quarter mile wide and one and a half miles deep. The surveyor's rigid rectangle grid with straight allowances for roads became the chief characteristic of the Ontario countryside that we see today (1969:11). Today one can employ technology such as Google Maps to see how this abstraction has played out on the shaping of particular farms and allotments surrounding Orchard Hill Farm; the paper plan below is still plainly apparent from a bird's-eye satellite view.



Fig. 1 Map of Sparta area farms circa 1880. Source: *The Illustrated Historical Atlas of Elgin County, 1877*. 1978

In their introduction to a book of photographs of rural Ontario, Blake and Greenhill (1969) describe how global processes of transformation have affected the landscape of Southern Ontario. As colonization impacted the land, the Industrial Revolution was also gathering steam; both were linked to the advance of modernity and mechanization that would have enormous consequences for agricultural practices worldwide.

In the early 1800s this area of the province had largely been a dense forest stretching from Windsor to Quebec. By 1850 it was almost completely settled by Europeans. Along roadways, fields for crops had been cleared, fenced, and were free of stumps. In fact, the clearing of land had proceeded at such a pace that “many settlers had barely left a sufficient woodlot” (1969:2).

Besides settlement, timber merchants (with all of their international connections – for instance, with colonial shipbuilders) had an enormous impact on the landscape of Southern Ontario. By 1870 the main roads no longer ran through long stretches of woodland, and the lumber business had already moved north. A decade later it returned for second growth and for trees rejected in the earlier period (1969:1). Indeed, when comparing photographs of Southwestern Ontario in the 1860s with photographs of the same location one hundred years later, one of the most striking differences lies in the absence of trees in the *earlier* sets (see Martin 1988 and Blake and Greenhill 1969:2). The wooded areas that are interspersed with fields on a drive through Elgin County today, then, and those which bookend the entrance to Orchard Hill Farm, represent relatively recent growth rather than vestiges of an earlier and “simpler” pioneer era.

Early farming trends and methods also impacted the landscape that we see today.

Just as the current markets for soybean and corn are leaving physical footprints on this region in the form of larger farms, the “wheat boom”, a period between 1830 and 1870 when wheat was a highly profitable crop for Ontario farmers, brought widespread changes to the land. Notably, this period of financial boom ended when another Canadian “local” –the prairies– began to compete in the world market and Manitoba wheat began to get higher prices (Blake and Greenhill 1969:4). By then, the four decades of “wheating” in Ontario had left a legacy of vast areas of cleared land and larger barns. A “great wave of building” was also made possible by the abundance of “wheat cash”; by 1875, even to the west of London, log homes had largely been replaced with brick, frame, and stone buildings, and inns, stores, halls, schools, and churches had been erected across the area (1969:4).

After 1870, as cheese factories appeared across the province, farmers turned from their dependence on grain sales to cattle. The dairy industry and the breeding of livestock for export again impacted on the land, not only because these pursuits required larger stables and better barns for hay, but because more land was now used as hay meadow or fenced pasture. Instead of taking the form of vast fields of wheat, farms were divided into a number of more permanent fields, the use of which was regularly rotated (1969:3). Square fields of 10 to 12 acres became the norm and, whereas fencing had before been frequently moved to accommodate enterprise, as new wire fencing became available, the characteristic patchwork pattern of Ontario became more fixed (1969:3). It was only after 1867 (Confederation) and into the first decade of the twentieth century, however, that “the Ontario farm took its essential shape” (Fuller 1985:7). Such a farm, according to Anthony Fuller, was a “progressive, commercial unit of production based on 100 acres of

arable land, pasture and woodlot and operated with the labour of the farm family and often a hired hand” (7). Most Ontario farms persisted in this shape until the Second World War, even as Canada's population was shifting demographically from rural to urban, and as large farm input companies were gaining influence nationwide. Although the dawn of the twentieth century saw the beginning of a so-called second Industrial Revolution with the introduction of technologies such as electricity and the internal combustion engine, the impact on agricultural production, particularly in Ontario, took much longer to be felt. In part this was due to the price and size of early machines such as tractors, which, due to the Depression of the 1930s became less economically feasible; in addition, many farm homesteads lacked electricity and running water, and a sizable quantity of their production was produced for self-subsistence (Mizener 2009:45-58). By the 1940s, although the Second World War had begun to bring some prosperity to urban populations, farmers in Canada remained “disproportionately impoverished” (Sandwell 2012:173).

Farmer Organizations and The National Farm Radio Forum

Around 1950 combinations of technological and economic influences initiated a period of profound changes for what was a substantial proportion of the Canadian population – a group which had historically been, at the very least, loosely connected by the occupation of farming. A brief overview of important transformations and issues in Ontario agriculture since the Second World War highlights changes not only in size and scale, but also in ideas about how food should be produced. Before discussing some of

these transformations, it is useful to briefly consider two developments that helped define how new farming methods were approached in Canada.

The first development involves the rise of collective rural organizations. Because Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. MacDonald, wanted to divert streams of immigration from crossing the border to competing states, his government passed a liberal homestead act, encouraging migrant farmers to become citizens (Solberg 1987:227). This system of land distribution resulted in progressive and reformist agrarian policy early in Canada's formation as a nation (1987:228).³ Strong rural communities formed united farm organizations and political groups which managed to gain important concessions from business and government (1987:225). It was a sense of a 'culture', of "community and mutuality", developed through collective and local projects, mutual aid, social connections, and economic bonds which enabled farmers to form movements and take direct political action (Rennie 2000:5). National and provincial organizations and alliances (such as the National Farmers Union [NFU] and the Ontario Farmers Association [OFA]), which grew out of early agrarian concerns, greatly influenced how post-WWII challenges were faced by agriculturalists in Ontario.

Another development that deserves mention is a popular radio program that was broadcast across Canada from 1941 to 1965. Canadian Federation of Agriculture representative Donald Cameron noted in 1940, "the rural dwellers of Canada comprise one third of the population and provide one half of the National wealth and receive one twelfth of the National income" (Qtd. in Sandwell:173). It was to this audience, unified by "a common cause of rural empowerment" (Sandwell 2012:187) that the Canadian

³ It is important not to romanticize this process of nation-building. See, for example, Eva Mackey (2002:23-50) for a discussion of racial and ethnic biases that determined an immigration policy favouring Britons and northern Europeans.

Broadcasting Corporation directed the “National Radio Farm Forum”. The services called for by these rural forums between 1941 and 1951 included medical insurance, larger school districts, ploughed winter highways, a Farm Credit Corporation and expanded community recreation facilities (2012:187). In its attention to agriculturally-based communities and interests that were (or were not) held in common, the Radio Farm Forum is historically significant for the ways it contributed to the development of a sense of an “imagined” community, at both local and national levels, an important issue which will be explored further in Chapter 3.

Post-Second World War Rural Issues and Transformations

In the decades that followed World War II, Canada and the United States both “moved ahead rapidly”, promoting agricultural research and development, and expanding agricultural and industrial production (Solberg 1987:232). As in the rest of North America, farmers and farming practices in Ontario during the early twentieth century were responding to the imposition of an industrial logic on the practice of agriculture (Fitzgerald 2003:3).

It is important to recognize that this particular logic was systemic; in other words, it was a logic that emerged across a wide array of social and economic domains, the product of the intensified process of industrialization and modernization that began in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. While twentieth-century farming involved profound—even revolutionary—changes, Deborah Fitzgerald (2003:5) reminds us that particular scientific or technological innovations were “located within a matrix of technical, social,

and ideological relationships” which combined to create and sustain overall change. As an example, the purchase of a tractor inevitably involved new practices and community relationships, such as a need for fuel and financing, changes in labour relations, or a new concern with road and rail infrastructure (2003:5). The introduction of new technology such as tractors also impacted human-animal relations and animal breed histories, as the use of traditional draft animals diminished relatively rapidly in many regions. In addition, new technology was key to the transfer of traditionally rural industries such as cheese, butter and wool, to city factories.

Mechanization and quantification in agriculture resonated well with what Fitzgerald calls a “transfer mentality,” in which “every sort of farming could be made comparable to every other, and farmers could be businessmen producing units of goods at set prices, not so unlike a factory owner making shoes or widgets” (2003:186). This rationalizing activity made U.S. agriculture transferable to other countries and led to a global “Green Revolution” beginning in the 1930s (2003:187). The *farm as a factory*, and the *farmer as a businessman* were two powerful metaphors utilized by business and leaders who were in positions to facilitate this transformation (2003:189). As the Canadian government made decisions that led to increasing land prices, growing farm mechanization, and more intensive mono-cropping (Sandwell 2012:188), farming in Ontario was transformed from a household-supporting enterprise into a more competitive business situated within a global economy.

With the technological revolution brought about by farm machinery, the amount of land that could be farmed was no longer subject to physical limitations and the costs of land, machinery, and production began to increase rapidly. But the high cost of new ‘off-

farm inputs' –fuel-powered machinery, fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides designed to increase farm production– prevented many existing farmers from expanding into big business agriculture (Sandwell 2012:188). What is known as the “cost-price squeeze” (in which the rate of increase in the combined costs of producing a commodity rises faster than the gross return received by the farmer when the commodity is sold) began to be a major problem for Canadian farmers in the post-war period – a problem which continues to this day (Winson 1993:90). In general, Canadian farm families tried to counter this lowering of net income by increasing the volume of farm production, using fertilizers and hybrid seeds to increase their productivity by an average of 6 per cent *per year* between 1945 and 1970 (1993:90).

In the 1950s, the Canadian government encouraged farmers (aided by their new tractors) to expand their land and production. In 1962 the federal Agriculture and Rural Development Act aimed to consolidate farms into larger production units and small farmers were encouraged to sell their land and seek jobs in towns or begin to specialize in a commodity (such as hogs or corn) on a large scale (2010:27). In the 1970s, as low interest rates and high inflation combined with talk of global food shortages and rocketing grain prices, government and banks encouraged farmers to borrow on the value of the land they owned to further increase production (2010:27). Clearly, though, not all farmers had the land base or borrowing power to adopt these various strategies. Mitchell states that “conditions surrounding the cost-price squeeze were controlled and directed in such a way that farmers ultimately could only be the losers” (Mitchell 1975:20). Tellingly, between 1941 and 1986 the number of farms nationwide dropped drastically, from 732,832 to 293,089 (Winson 1993:91). This number has continued to drop over

time: in 2011, Canada had 205,730 census farms, 74,840 of them in Ontario (Statistics Canada 2011). When interest rates and oil prices rose in the 1980s many of the province's farmers found themselves unable to maintain debts they had taken on expanding their operations. Bankruptcies, foreclosures and sell-offs characterized what became known as the Farm Crisis of this decade, a period marked by the widely publicized actions of frustrated and angry farmers across North America, including a tractor blockade of the Ontario Food Terminal (2010:28) and illegal 'penny auctions' organized by farmers to undermine banks and support neighbours forced into foreclosure (see Wilford 1984).

The Farm Crisis and the issues at its core have not been resolved, according to the National Farmers Union (2010:28). Global trade agreements, rising land prices and farm costs, and the spread of contract farming have further contributed to the transformation of the province's farms in the last two decades. Stuart Laidlaw (2003:196) speaks of a "new set of practices" in which farmers' traditional knowledge has become secondary. Contemporary farm management, he writes, is about knowing "whether or not the company supplying the input will make good on its advertising promises, and whether the market broker is reliable" (2003:196). Winson maintains that at one end of the farming spectrum "massive accumulation" is occurring among a small number of elite farm operators who are more likely to consider processors, exporters, dealers, and exchange brokers as allies than their local farm communities (1993:91). On the other end, a greater number of small farm operators has increasingly sought off-farm work in order to remain on their land (1993:92).

Of course, off-farm work is not new to Ontario's rural community. Historian Ruth Sandwell (2013:22) notes that in Canada, industrialization occurred first in the

countryside and in “the bush” and rural landowners and their families provided much of the seasonal and temporary workforce required for early logging, fishing, mining, and other rural industrial enterprises. Wages earned in this manner provided crucial support for “farm” households across the country (Sandwell 2013:22). According to Halpern (2001:113), off-farm work comprised 14 per cent of total farm family income in 1941, and in 1964 Helen C. Abell noted that “these are indeed family farms where husbands and wife adjust their labour and abilities to maintain their homes in their familiar rural environment despite changing economic and social conditions” (Qtd. in Halpern:113). In the 1980s, struggling farm women and men took on more off-farm work than ever before (Halpern 2001:133). In 2010, 47.8% of all Ontario farm operators had an off-farm job or business (Statistics Canada 2011).

“A Rural People”

Like other world populations, Canada saw increased urbanization in the first half of the 20th century but it was not until 1976 that Canada’s rural population actually decreased for the first time (Sandwell 2012:172). In Ontario, one of the most rapidly urbanizing provinces, “the existence of prosperous farming districts and large urban populations with roots in the countryside ensured that farming and conceptions of farming played a central role in the provinces’ society and culture even as towns and cities expanded” (Crerar qtd. in Sandwell:172). Sandwell maintains that far into the twentieth century Canada was still “a rural country”, Canadians “overwhelmingly a rural people”, and –importantly– that rural society differed in significant ways from that of the

increasing urban population (172). For example, Sandwell discusses how many rural dwellers subscribed to an ethic of self-help that, at the same time, co-existed with co-operative values that went beyond what many viewed as an isolated urban individualism (175). Recently, historians such as James Rennie (2000) and Monda Halpern (2001) have emphasized the present-day persistence of rural populations, and, as we have seen above, the fact that social and socialist reform in Canada was an important rural phenomenon until the 1950s and beyond (Sandwell:172).

Indicators of Change Over Time in Rural Ontario

While important trends continued to alter the rural landscape after the Second World War, among them the automobile and hydro-electric service in farm households and barns, demographic trends were also having critical effects. In the relatively short period between 1951 and 1971 Ontario's population increased from 4.6 million to 7.7 million, while farming population almost halved from 678,000 in 1951 to 363,00 in 1971 (Halpern 2001:110). And while communities of long-settled, Anglo-Protestant Ontario families were being made more diverse by European immigrants and migrants from urban areas, 60% of farm sons and 80% of daughters were already leaving family farms by 1971 (2001:110), throwing farm futures into uncertainty.

As mentioned earlier, one indicator of change is the consistent decline in the number of farms in Ontario, from 160,000 in 1951, to 100,000 in 1971 (Halpern 2001:110) to 51,950 in 2011 (Statistics Canada 2011). At the same time, average farm size has greatly increased –from 130 acres in 1941, and 170 acres in 1971 (Halpern

2001:110), to 778 acres in 2011 (Statistics Canada 2011). In Ontario in 2011 there were 1,547 farms of 1,120 acres or larger (Statistics Canada 2011). Today the largest farms, with annual revenue over \$500,000, account for the majority of agricultural production in Canada (Statistics Canada 2011).

Another indicator of change over time in rural Ontario involves traditional gender and family roles. The widespread adoption of the tractor and other agricultural technologies not only reduced the need for farmhands but also lessened work for farm wives and daughters who were expected to look after them, and for children whose labour had traditionally been employed in the fields (Halpern 2012:111). Farm technology also caused women's farm labour to be increasingly appropriated by men. In areas such as poultry production, which transferred easily to industrialized forms, by mid-century women were separated from “the only work that they had directly performed for profit and, aside from housework, over which they had governed conditions and assumed some control” (2012:112). It is important to note here, however, that across Canada today nearly a third of farms are operated by women, in independent businesses that reach beyond traditional partnerships and shared decision-making with farm spouses. In a context in which the overall number of farms and farm operators are declining, farm size is increasing, and the population of mostly male farmers aging, Statistics Canada figures show that in 2011, 27.4 per cent of operators were women (CBC News: Dec. 11, 2016).

All of these changes have had profound social and political consequences for the farm community and wider Canadian society on many different levels (Winson 93:89). Although the Canadian family farm is undoubtedly a cultural icon, pictured by many as a place where independent farmers own their land and practice farming as a “way of life”, a

reality-based picture involves high debt-load and off-farm work on small farms and enormous debt and small profit margins for large operations (Elton 2012:25-26). While there has been growth in the number of corporate farms in Canada, they are still operated predominantly by farming families (Statistics Canada 2008:9). However, there is no doubt that in rural Ontario, life on the “family farm” and in the local community has been radically transformed since the mid-twentieth century (Sandwell 2012:101). With the number of small farms and farmers drastically reduced and large farms bringing in increasing profits, post-war demographic, economic and technological changes have resulted in what Winson (1993:90) calls “a definite process of *social differentiation* within the farm community.” It is a process that has impacted not only the solidarity of this group but also the effectiveness of producers in protecting their way of life; politics based on assumptions of homogeneity and similarity of interest have shifted, he says, to a politics based on clear class differences (1993:92).

Land ownership, tenancy, global investment and rising land prices

Individualized ownership of land was a central aspect of colonization as Europeans displaced native populations. As Upper Canada became established, tenancy (renting one’s home and farmland) was associated with a feudal past –in particular with oppressed peasants in Ireland and Scotland, or with sharecroppers of the U.S. South (Wilson 2009:8). Nevertheless, while tenants were not part of the liberal vision of a capitalist political economy in the New World, they were, Wilson states, “very much a part of its working reality” (2009:9).

Recently, patterns of land tenancy in Canada have been affected by an “unprecedented rush” by global investment funds to buy farmland worldwide (Waldie and Leeder:2010). Food security concerns and a surge in agricultural commodity prices have made agriculture “a promising new asset class” (2010). As farm costs climb steadily, often negating any increases in crop price, land rental arrangements with investors provide farmers with capital to increase productivity. The implications of having a growing number of “outside” landowners concerns some, such as National Farmer's Union President Terry Boehm, who worries about “a new feudalism where those that work on the land become labourers” (2010).

In the province of Saskatchewan, farmland prices have remained low because laws supported by successive governments have limited foreigners to owning just 10 acres, and have blocked publicly traded companies and pension funds from buying farmland (2010). By contrast, in Ontario and Manitoba – provinces with less restrictive ownership rules– prices have risen significantly, a phenomenon to which record crop prices have also contributed. In the Southwestern Ontario area, particularly the Woodstock and Stratford regions, land values increased sharply in 2011, with prices reaching \$15,000 per acre compared to \$9,000 in the previous year (London Free Press: Monday, September 10, 2012). In Elgin County the average rise in farmland values from 2010 to 2015 was 19.23 percent, the third-highest rate of yearly change among ten counties in the region. 2015 median farmland price was about \$11,000 an acre; In 2010, it had been less than \$5,000 an acre (London Free Press: Friday, February 19, 2016). The cost of renting land to farm has also been pushed up by the increase in purchase price. In Elgin County, the supply of farmland that does come onto the real estate market has been shrinking. It is

currently being ‘snapped up’, most often by the seller’s neighbours, who are established farmers expanding their operations (London Free Press: Wednesday, September 11, 2013). Such high land prices combined with high farm input costs have increased risk and narrowed possibilities for new farmers across the region.

Globalization, Trade Agreements, and Contract Farming

Perhaps the most profound changes to farming in Ontario in the past decades have stemmed from the collective movement of transnational corporations to “alter the governing structures of the world” (Qualman 2007:258). The North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA] and the World Trade Organization [WTO] have had a huge impact on the relative size and market power of the various actors in the agri-food production system. Overwhelming any benefits from a five-fold increase in exports since 1975 is the effect that the agreements have had on power relations between farmers and agribusiness corporations (2007:251). Canadian net farm income data supports Darrin Qualman’s assertion that trade agreements and globalization have decreased farmers’ prices and profits and increased those of agri-business corporations (2007:252). By removing so-called trade barriers (tariffs, quotas, and duties), “free-trade agreements” erase economic borders between nations and channel the world’s farmers into “a single, hyper-competitive market”, at the same time facilitating agribusiness mergers that nearly eliminate competition among transnational corporations (Qualman 2007:251). Corporate consolidation in the four agricultural input sectors (seeds, pesticides, chemical fertilizers and farm equipment) raise questions about domination of the industrial food chain and

what this means for farmers, and about food sovereignty and climate issues. An example of this corporate concentration is the reduction of farm equipment manufacturers to only two which now dominate the world market: John Deere and Case/New Holland (2007:258).

Qualman also finds that effective cooperation in Canada's successful national farm organization has been undermined, not because of less cooperation or disorganization, but because co-operation and organization at a national level has simply become less relevant and effective as commodity markets, the regulation of trade and even internal agricultural policies have become global (2007:254). By dramatically weakening the state, global trade agreements have limited the power to create similar programs and agencies and reduced the effectiveness of provincial and national farm organizations (2007:256). This contrasts with a history of attempts by Canadian farmers to organize politically and economically, often with government assistance (a good example being Ontario's supply management systems for dairy, poultry, and eggs) (2007:254).

Corporate needs for regularity of supply, consistency of quality, and profitability have fuelled the trend in recent decades towards growing integration of producers with agribusiness input suppliers and food processors (Winson 1993:134) In Southwestern Ontario, where physical geography makes a very wide range of crops possible, the nature of a commodity (perishability, harvesting equipment costs, etc.) is a significant determinant of whether processing firms will be engaged in corporate farming (in which processors own or rent land for crop production). In the 1970s this appeared to be the dominant trend for the future of farming, but here, as elsewhere in the world, food

manufacturers in a wide range of commodities have increasingly turned towards contractual arrangements with farmers that maximize control over complex agricultural processes (Winson 1993:138). Contracts vary by region and commodity type, but, in general, contract integration has had negative consequences for farmers, including loss of autonomy and bargaining power and loss of control over the most basic production decisions (1993:140). In effect, such arrangements may reduce a farmer to being a “piece-worker,” using his/her own land, tools, and labour to produce commodities that are owned by someone else (1993:140). In Ontario, the presence of strong marketing boards with legislative powers over contract conditions has provided farmers with varying degrees of protection from processors in positions of much greater economic power (1993:145). For instance, supply management of the poultry industry in Ontario has left farmers with some power and independence in their industry, in comparison to the U.S where giant corporations such as Tyson own the birds in farmers' barns and control every step of the process “from fertilized eggs to the grocery store shelf” (Laidlaw 2003:26, 34). In Ontario, only a farmer can own a chicken under supply management rules, so companies must sell chicks to the farmers and buy them back fully-grown at prices negotiated between provincial marketing board and slaughterhouses (2003:34).

Still, as large processors tend to award contracts to larger, more capitalized growers, the social differentiation of farms is further supported by this practice. Corporate concentration and the turn away from open-marketing purchasing by food manufacturers has also meant that farmers have little or no choice about whom they will sell to. This in turn forces them to adopt processor's preferences in farm technology,

another blow to smaller farm operators (Winson 1993:153).

The case of tomato growers in southern Ontario is illustrative of various points regarding the impact of both the “vertical integration” of agriculture and free trade agreements. Before mechanization, farmers could easily switch to other crops in years when tomato prices were too low. And prior to free trade, numerous processing plants in the Leamington area bought local tomatoes from over three hundred farmers, allowing some bargaining space for growers. A fifteen per cent tariff also kept American tomatoes out of the country. NAFTA resulted in the closure of several large plants and an almost immediate price drop of 12 per cent, and soon the H.J. Heinz Company came to dominate processing in the area (Laidlaw 2003:197). (Even the Leamington hockey arena soon bore the Heinz name.) Small farmers (meaning *hand*-pickers) were eventually forced out of business, and by 2002 contracts with the remaining fifty-five large growers specified varieties to be grown, planting and harvesting schedules, pesticide and herbicide policies, and, of course, prices. The 2013 purchase of Heinz by Warren Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway and 3G Capital, a very large Brazilian investment firm, resulted in the closure of Heinz’s Leamington plant, which had processed 40% of Ontario’s field tomatoes. The closing affected not only the 740 plant workers but also greenhouse businesses, truckers, seasonal farm workers, and businesses supplying the industry (St. Thomas Times-Journal: Thursday, November 14, 2013).

However, in an unpredicted turnaround, a low Canadian dollar and new export opportunities in markets as widely-flung as Ohio, Nigeria, and China, have driven a resurgence in tomato processing in the area. In order to cater to high foreign demand for items such as bell peppers, cucumbers, and specialty tomatoes (including organic), area

industries –with the help of government incentives– have also been busy adapting factories for new technologies such as micro-perforated plastic packaging, which extends the shelf life of produce intended for global export (Windsor Star, February 2, 2016).

Even this has not proved to be the final chapter of the Leamington tomato saga. U.S. owned condiment producer French's, in a savvy move to exploit the negative publicity and social media backlash surrounding the Heinz plant closure in Leamington, has announced (CBC News: April 17, 2017) that it will produce all of the ketchup it sells in Canada at a new Toronto facility and using only Canadian tomatoes (previously, some of its Canadian-sold product had been processed in the United States.) While this company currently is playing the 'local' card, even referring to "True Commitment to Our Communities" in its advertising (<https://www.frenchs.com/our-promise/> Accessed May 24, 2017), it is difficult not to see this as anything more than a transparent marketing strategy. While French's has stepped into a gap for now, they are ultimately beholden, as the Heinz company continues to be, to shareholders and profit as the bottom line. How long this multi-national company will stay committed to this 'community' remains to be seen.

This example not only shows how industrial agriculture in Ontario –and elsewhere– has been almost totally integrated into a globalized market, but also how public-private "partnerships" are increasingly necessary components of the large-scale transnational projects. Government support, therefore, is still critical for spurring agricultural initiatives in Ontario and in Canada as a whole. What has changed since MacDonald's day is a globalized economy in which states search out increasingly fleeting investors who are looking for profits in volatile markets. This type of capitalism is what

Daniel Miller (1997) calls “pure capitalism”, which he describes as “that which is envisaged in economic theory, and is dependent upon the construction of certain ideal conditions that would facilitate capitalist enterprises’ working ‘efficiently’” (Miller 42). Under such circumstances, national and local interests are not prioritized, since farmers and their products are construed as commodities whose value lies mostly in their exchange value, and in the inherent political capital they carry as symbols of the “local” and of “locally grounded” jobs.

Visible/Invisible Labour Force

While companies such as Heinz and French’s may use notions of the “local” to market food products in an era of “pure capitalism”, what is left out of the picture is the concealed labour force that supports industrialized, large-scale farming in Southwestern Ontario. Here, “invisible” workers are legally construed as “temporary,” while in reality the work itself persists (Faraday 2012:5).

The issue of agricultural wage labour in Ontario is not new; it goes at least as far back as the early nineteenth-century settlement of the province, when a hierarchical system of land grants based on rank was established (Parr 1985:91-92). The ending of free grants in the 1830s made it difficult for everyone who wanted to farm to acquire land, and consequently some of this surplus labour became labour-for-hire (1985:94). More recently (particularly since the 1960s), larger farms, and increasing productivity have led to serious labour shortages in the countryside, especially in the tobacco, fruit, and vegetable sectors (Basok 2002:40). Under pressure from farm groups, the

Department of Labor consented to importing Caribbean farm workers, and in 1966 The Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) brought Jamaican workers to Essex County in Southwestern Ontario to harvest field crops. As labor shortages continued, many farmers contracted unauthorized workers from Mexico and Portugal, many of whom endured “extremely abusive working and living conditions” (Basok 2002:41). In 1974 the government included Mexico in its program, and eventually opened it up to other Caribbean nations. Today, most of the low-wage agricultural workers coming to Canada end up in Ontario, arriving here through different streams of Canada’s Temporary Foreign Worker Program. Many are employed in vegetable growing operations in Essex County, where one can find the largest concentration of greenhouses in North America (Elton 2010:95).

Faraday points out that referring to people in programs such as SAWP as *temporary* “obscures their long-term, structural importance...and the decades-long tenure of some migrants; indeed, only their visa is temporary”. She further finds that labelling migrants as *foreign* “is part of a nationalist discourse that contributes ideologically to their legal and social disentitlement within the labour market and society” (Faraday 2012:6). Tanya Basok discusses Ontario's dependency on offshore labour, pointing to the need to secure a reliable workforce, available on demand to work under conditions that no Canadian would comply with (2002:19). Migrant workers have fewer effective legal protections than Canadian workers, and are vulnerable to abuse by recruiters, immigration consultants, and employers. Their legal, economic, and social marginalization compounds problems in claiming the rights they do possess within the system (Faraday 2012:33). Long working hours and little free time make foreign workers

invisible to many people outside of the farms where the workers are employed. When they do appear in Southwestern Ontario communities, such visibility – in its sense of “spectacle” – underlines the way the agricultural system is sustained by a mostly hidden and “othered” force (Basok describes Fridays in the town of Leamington when about a thousand Mexican seasonal farm workers go shopping at the No Frills grocery store [2002:3]). The invisibility of foreign workers who are, in reality, essential to the agricultural industry in Southwestern Ontario is one of the troubling aspects of the commercial marketing of “local” food systems in this area.

Another –at times visible, at times seemingly invisible– facet of the agriculture story in Southwestern Ontario is the presence since the early nineteenth century of Anabaptist (Mennonite and Amish) communities whose farming practices, much like their religious ones, range in varying degrees from traditional to “modern.” Although the Mennonite population in Ontario was once a largely agrarian community, these days farmers represent “a rapidly diminishing segment” of the membership (Pektau 2007:2). Because of their acceptance of certain technology (as opposed to the Amish) much recent Mennonite agricultural history traces many of the same challenges as that of mainstream farmers – including an exodus of the next generation from farming, the closing of small local produce-processing plants after NAFTA, and pressures to become larger and more “efficient” to accommodate the large-scale market (Pektau 2007:3). Edward M. Bennet writes that the dominant social paradigm in agriculture, which values a “bigger-is-better” industrial agriculture and corporate Darwinism, sees the traditional small-scale family and community-centred farms of self-sustaining groups (such as the Old Order Mennonites in Waterloo County or the Old Order Amish in Milverton) as “inferior relics

of the past” even though they are exemplars of agricultural diversity and sustainable community (Bennet 2003:158). About 75% of Ontario’s Old Order Amish make their living by farming (contrasted with a national average of less than 2%), rarely with more than 100 tillable acres (Bennet 2003:159). Amish farmers try to increase the diversification of the farm, rather than its size, to accommodate increases in family size and to sustain a strong local community. As traditional communities, these groups have experiences in common with First Nations people (2003:169): they have asymmetric relationships with the state, they have been viewed as leading an “inferior” lifestyle in relation to the dominant consumption-driven model, and others wish to usurp control of their land. Yet, the persistence of these communities demonstrates not only that “human-scale farm strategies with local niche markets” (2003:169) can produce flexible and successful farm operations, but that such strategies are not new in Southwestern Ontario.

1.2 Civic Agriculture and the CSA Model

The discussions above have been an attempt to highlight some critical aspects of the current and historical context of the mainstream agricultural system at play in Southern Ontario, a system in which food, land, animals, and farmers have become commodities. With a momentum driven by globalized market forces farmers are locked into *working on* the land in particular ways with particular crops, products, and timelines, a situation in which it is difficult to work against the grain of what is, in effect, a giant capitalist machine.

It is against this backdrop of an industrialized and global-scale food system that “alternatives” have recently become more mainstream. In an age of information, it is

easier for consumers to be more aware of problems with food security, safety, and sustainability. People are seeking not only healthier foods, but often (not always) also ecologically sensitive production grounded in local communities. Since, in addition to these concerns, our relation to food is so intimate –we consume it and incorporate it into our bodies– it is not surprising that there is a growing movement among producers and consumers to “connect” back to the food source. At a personal level, as we shall discuss further in Chapter 2, this entails a “re-enchantment,” whereby this is understood as the re-establishment of a meaningful connection with food and with the people and places where it is produced.

The idea of establishing such links on a smaller scale, which is a central issue in the “push” for local food, underlies what Thomas Lyson labelled “civic agriculture” (Lyson 2004, Lyson and Guptill 2004, De Lind 2001: 217; De Lind and Bingen 2007:127). Civic agriculture embraces locally implemented strategies that provide an alternative to a commodity or industrial agriculture in which the main goal is productivity and efficiency to generate profit (Lyson and Guptill 2004: 370-372). At the large scale of industrial agriculture, which has become entrenched in business and academia as the normative approach to agriculture, food is primarily a commodity and farmers are merely workers whose labour occurs on farms. Farms, in turn, are seen as sites “where production occurs independent of the local community or social order” (Kay 1986 quoted in Lyson and Guptill 2004:372). In contrast, civic agriculture attempts to relocalize food, and so encompasses not only small-scale farming practices, but also a wide range of approaches to food and agriculture that include farmers’ markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), co-ops, community gardens and even eat-local movements (De Lind 2001:217).

In his book *Civic Agriculture* (2004), Thomas A. Lyson describes the rise of civic agriculture as a response to the “large-scale, well-managed, capital-intensive, technologically sophisticated, industrial-like operations” that I have described above (61). Although Lyson's notion of civic agriculture can be mapped onto what has become known as alternative agriculture, the stressing of the “civic” is important, since it expresses more than a mere desire to improve the quality of produce or the way crops are produced. Rather, thinking of these alternative projects as civic agriculture stresses the also important goals of contributing to the sustainability of the farmer's community at multiple levels, and in particular of being part of a “community's *problem-solving capacity*” (63; emphasis in original).

Lyson writes,

Civic agriculture...is a locally organized system of agriculture and food production characterized by networks of producers who are bound together by place. Civic agriculture embodies a commitment to developing and strengthening an economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable system of agriculture and food production that relies on local resources and serves local markets and consumers. The imperative to earn a profit is filtered through a set of cooperative and mutually supporting social relations. Community problem solving rather than individual competition is the foundation of civic agriculture (2004:63-64).

Like Lyson, many advocates of alternative food systems employ various notions of what constitutes “local”, “community”, and “place” in an effort to “re-localize food system production and consumption” (Feagan 2007:24). Inherent in the pursuit of locally sustainable agriculture is the idea that such practices involve a much smaller geographic region than the long chains of production and distribution characteristic of industrial agriculture (Feagan 2007:25-26). As Robert Feagan makes clear, the notions of community and the local that are implicitly or explicitly promoted can be quite varied and

ambiguous; nevertheless, a case is generally made by its practitioners that agricultural practices are localized. (Feagan 2007:25).

However, the separation between the “local” and the “global” is not as clear cut as it is sometimes construed to be by advocates of civic agriculture or local food systems: the two realms must be seen as “interdependent, and not in simplistic *either-or* kinds of end states” (Feagan 2007:34–35). The pursuit of the local can, when equated with a search for purity, degenerate into xenophobia or “defensive localism”; yet it also can suggest a more positive view that acknowledges the fact that the boundaries of the local are fluid, which can lead to the “recognition of a sense of place which is relational, open and permeable” (2007:37).

An extension of Feagan’s positive but cautious endorsement of local food systems is the criticism that an over-enthusiasm for local food can lead to a “local trap” (Born and Purcell: 2008, James 2016). Born and Purcell approach the subject of food production and distribution from the vantage point of urban planning, and so they address macroeconomic issues that might get lost when stressing localist strategies. Their contention is that an empirical and analytical approach to scale is critical so as not to approach the benefits and drawbacks of different forms of food production with clouded judgement. For Born and Purcell, the “local trap” resides in an unreflective endorsement of the local that leaves many important issues surrounding food unanswered, such as, how community is defined, what is its scale, what are the community-directed goals, and who benefits (2008:205).

Marsden critiques the association often made between alternative food networks, the local, and face-to-face interaction, pointing out that alternative “food chains” cannot

be defined solely in terms of “face-to-face” contact, since such chains need not be proximate or necessarily regional (Marsden 2004:138). Rather, what makes certain food chains “alternative” is how they define their “space, quality convention, nature, and agricultural and food socio-technical practices in ways that make it impossible to replicate these outside that network” (2004:138-139). As Marsden notes, however, some of these larger alternative food chains are not “marginal to the conventional food system,” so it is important to understand how alternative networks are formed and maintained, and in whose interest it is that they succeed or perish. For example, Julie Guthman suggests that “as organic agriculture becomes more mainstream —and large scale— it is abandoning its roots as a radical alternative to conventional agriculture and becoming just another cog in the industrial agribusiness machine” (qtd. in Schnell 2007:551). The scaling up of alternative and local food systems remains a challenge in making these systems more than niche markets for a select group of consumers (for the challenges and possibilities of scaling local food system agriculture, see Mount 2012). In addition, the “conventionalization” of alternative food practices as they are adopted by the industrial food system pose a threat to the value, and the nature, of the practices that made them “alternative” to begin with, which is what has happened in some places with organic agriculture (Buck, Getz, and Guthman 1997).

The references above point to ambiguities and tensions that can affect both “the local” and “alternative” as they are applied to agricultural practices. These tensions and ambiguities are important for my study of Orchard Hill for two reasons. First, the people I encountered at Orchard Hill understand the farm as “local” and “alternative.” This means, as will be evident in the ethnographic sections of this study, that this particular

CSA is understood by its members and workers as not being “just another cog in the industrial agribusiness machine,” to repeat Julie Guthman’s phrase above. The sense of being connected to food, farmer, and farm at Orchard Hill is at the core of a belief that this CSA is different from industrial agriculture; for the people I interviewed this constitutes part of the appeal of being an Orchard Hill member. This binary –alternative vs. industrial, also apparent in Guthman’s quote– appears time and again in my interviews and in endorsements by advocates of alternative forms of agriculture, wherein alternative and industrial practice are sometimes construed as being radically different and totally disconnected from each other. Marsden’s suggestion above –that “true” alternative practices are those that cannot be replicated outside the networks– could be seen an expression of this stance. Yet the notion of an alternative agriculture as something that cannot be replicated, or that is strictly bounded is problematic, if CSAs and other such operations are to contribute to a civic agriculture. It is hard to see how this notion of “alternative” can be viable into the future; by definition, it cannot serve as a model for other, similar farms. This is of particular concern at Orchard Hill, since the operation is built around Ken and Martha, and in this sense, its future is uncertain.

The second important link to my study is found in Burn and Purcell’s critique of the “local trap” which challenges an exaggerated and uncritical endorsement of “local” (and “alternative”). Here, an attempt is made to achieve a wider understanding of how operations such as Orchard Hill fit into the larger food system.

Thus, on the one hand, the binary industrial/alternative recurs as a template for the way the farm is perceived and worked; on the other hand, there is the ever-present problem of participating and enduring in the wider food system to which Orchard Hill

and its participants are connected in multiple ways.

It is important to keep in mind that at its core, the idea of a “civic agriculture” expresses the desire of farmers and consumers to have more say in how food is produced and not leave it to industry. Despite the ambiguities and tensions described above, the proliferation of initiatives such as urban community food gardens, CSAs, urban organic box delivery services, and revitalized farmers' markets has served to further raise consciousness about food production, and make people more aware of local food practices, and issues of social justice and accountability. Some farmers have been well-positioned to take advantage of these developments, and to respond to consumer demands for fresh, organic, local food, either through conversion to organic, (such as some Mennonite co-ops in the Waterloo, Ontario area [Burt :16]) or continued chemical-free but uncertified practice (such as the thriving Amish Hope Co-operative in Elgin County and Orchard Hill Farm). Such initiatives (and the responses of the commercial food industry) are part of an ongoing story of complex economic, social, political, and technological changes in which land, crops, labour, and consumers have all been transformed and/or re-conceptualized.

The CSA Model

Contemporary alternative food initiatives such as Community Supported Agriculture farms offer personalized and place-based links to local farmers and their products. In doing so, they are tapping into the disenchantment some people feel with what they see as anonymous and distant large-scale food sources. Although CSAs vary in

their particulars, they generally function by having consumers purchase shares of a farmer's (or sometimes a group of farmers') output. For the farmer, this means a guaranteed market for their produce; for consumers, a direct and immediate link to the food and farmer with which they are literally invested. This is a crucial component of the CSA enterprise, since it provides immediate financing and creates a certain amount of financial stability for farmers within the context of a competitive food market and unpredictable farming seasons. This relation between consumer and producer is one of the defining features of Community Supported Agriculture, and the sharing of benefits and risks is central to the trust that such relation entails.

Critics of the conventional food system who are dismayed by the commodification and industrialization of organic food see in CSA a viable, truly alternative mode of food production (Schnell 2007:552). In addition, some researchers on the subject call attention to the “pragmatic yet transformative” potential of CSAs in contributing to food system change (Feagan and Henderson 2009:203). The micro-level interactions characteristic of how CSA farms define themselves suggest a “direct” and “transparent” access to labour and its material results, and this sense of connection is addressed by many CSAs in their mandates. (For instance, Orchard Hill Farm's own membership brochure states:

“Through CSAs, people are claiming back a connection to the production of their food.” and, *“Consumers get back in touch with where their food comes from...”*.) Such a

connection suggests a contrast with both the alienation of occluded labour (for example, the migrant labourers who till Ontario land but remain anonymous) and the mediation between production and consumption that is intrinsic to industrial agriculture. CSAs have therefore constructed their mission as offering an alternative to the products (and

production) of large-scale agriculture. Furthermore, most CSAs also try to reduce food transport over long distances and promote responsible land stewardship.

Versions of CSA based on the concept of consumer/farmer partnerships emerged in Japan in the 1970s as a system called *teikei* – meaning “partnership” or more specifically, “food with the farmer’s face on it”. These gardens tended to be small and intensively farmed. Often multiple rural farmers joined together to supply a group of urban members who shared a concern about the use of chemicals in agriculture (Henderson 2007:xvi).

Other versions of CSA were also developed in Europe in the 1960s and 70s, such as those in Switzerland and Germany. Some of these projects were inspired by the collective farms developed in Chile during the Allende years and by the peasant-worker movement in Brittany in France (Henderson 2010). In many, people were putting the ideas of Austrian philosopher Rudolph Steiner (1861-1925) into practice. Steiner’s method of ‘biodynamic agriculture’, promoted in a series of lectures published in the 1920s, rejected farm management practices that damage the environment, soil, plant, animal or human health.

In the middle of the 1980s, Temple-Wilton Community Farm in New Hampshire, and Indian Line Farm in Massachusetts simultaneously became the first CSAs in North America. These projects were inspired by both Steiner’s ‘holistic’ system (which also emphasized the mutual interests of producer and consumer), and by the “small is beautiful” ideas of E.F. Schumacher, who urged people to produce locally what is consumed locally. “*Local food for local people at a fair price to them and a fair wage to the growers*” was the goal of the founders of Indian Line Farm, where the term Community Supported Agriculture was first utilized (Henderson 2007:xiv).

From these first experiments, the number of CSAs in the U.S.A. has grown to over 7300 in 2017 (Urgenci). In Canada, the actual number is difficult to pin down, particularly because some CSAs still operate “under the radar”. A survey of Community Supported Agriculture in Canada done in 2016 at the University of Guelph identified 399 CSA farms in nine provinces across the country (Devlin and Davis 2016:1) but was limited to farms that utilized websites and/or Facebook. In 1989 Orchard Hill Farm, according to its owners, had been only the second CSA to be formally established in Ontario and remained among only a handful in the province until relatively recently. As of this writing, The Ontario CSA Directory website has a map that displays over two hundred CSA farms, clustered mainly in the southern part of the province from Windsor to Ottawa (The Ontario CSA Directory), making up the bulk of the nation’s CSAs.

CSAs, almost unknown in Ontario prior to 2010, are now being widely promoted as a consumer strategy that simultaneously (indeed, almost *miraculously*) champions healthy eating, small farmers, local economies and the environment. Even the local Public Health Unit in the area of Orchard Hill Farm included “taking advantage of community supported agriculture” in its recent list of recommendations for low-income food budgeting. (Forrest, *St. Thomas Times-Journal*, May 27, 2014). The Devlin and Davis survey found that the average years of experience running CSAs was 5.86 (Devlin and Davis 2016:3), a figure that coincides with the recent upsurge in popularity of the approach with farmers and consumers. As part of this upsurge, several fledgling CSA operations were founded during the course of this study within twenty kilometres of Orchard Hill Farm, each an individualized response to both local and global discussions about food that have been taking place on television, in print media, and in public and

private conversations.

In a recent study Jonathan Schnell found that CSAs in the United States were more commonly found in “rapidly growing, heavily urbanized or suburbanized areas” (2007:554), regions with a greater number of smaller farms, a reflection both of their approach to agriculture and of the proximity to urban areas where land is scarce and fragmented (2007:555-556). In addition, and an important factor for the sustainability of “localistic” food chains, CSA participants generally had higher incomes, more education, and, using Schnell’s criteria, a more progressive political orientation (2007:556-557). In fact, according to his study the correlation between the political progressivism of a region and the number of CSAs was almost linear (2007:557). Schnell interpreted his mapping of CSAs as a strong indicator of “neolocalism,” a desire to connect with place. The “distinctive geography” of CSAs in his study suggested strong affiliation with an anti-corporate and anti-globalization sympathies (2007:557). This is congruent with the conceptualization of CSA by its advocates “as a radical attempt to resist industrial agriculture” (Cone and Myhre 2000:188). In spite of this, Schnell cautions one not to look at the CSAs through a “conservative/liberal lens,” since there were indications in his study that CSAs have a complex membership base representative of a wide range of political affiliations. In any case, CSAs have great potential to expand across the political spectrum because they emphasize local economies, self-reliance with little government intervention and have roots in the free enterprise system (Schnell 2007:557-558).

Regardless of how it is conceived of and played out in particular farms, “community” is an important dimension of CSA, as its name suggests. In order to build their membership some CSA farms tap into other established groups such as churches,

school-based networks, and other community organizations (Cone and Myhre 2000:190). Many CSA farms organize activities that bring members together, such as concerts, cooking classes, potlucks, or hands-on participation in food cultivation itself (Schnell 2007:559-560). However, several studies of CSAs in New York have suggested that most of members approach the farms instrumentally as a source of fresh produce, and not as a means of establishing ties with other members (Feagan and Henderson 2009; Pole and Gray 2013). A survey by Cone and Myhre of consumer motives for participating in a CSA also suggested that, as with farmers' markets, environmental concerns, quality of food, and support of local agriculture were high on the list, whereas community building was not (2000:190). Laura B. DeLind found that most CSA members in her study – although politically aware, environmentally-active, and health conscious– were engaged in a resistance “primarily of consumers – not of citizens” (DeLind 1999:8), supporting a vision that lacked “any wider notion of social solidarity, civic debate, co-ordinated action or sacrifice” (Gabriel and Lang, qtd. in DeLind 1999:8).

In one way or another, Orchard Hill is affected by all the issues described above. However, the CSA model is enacted differently on each particular farm, so it is important to understand how Orchard Hill came to be what it is today.

The Story of Orchard Hill

One has only to browse a number of CSA websites or brochures to see that, while most CSAs operate within the tenets of the broad common definition outlined above, each CSA tends to be uniquely realized through specific combinations of geography, history, climate, resources, animals and people. Thus, like other CSAs, the farm where I

undertook my research is unique in its approach to the core ideas of Community Supported Agriculture.

Orchard Hill Farm is a 93 acre farm on the outskirts of the village of Sparta, Ontario, within the County of Elgin. Martha and Ken, the landowners, are affiliated with the Society of Friends Meeting (they call themselves Quakers or just “Friends”). Through Martha's family, they have a multi-generational tie to this particular plot of land that reaches back to the clearing of the land by Quakers who came to this region from Pennsylvania, beginning in 1789. Martha and Ken describe their farm as diversified organic; they grow vegetables and small fruit, hay, pasture, and grains for their livestock (which includes horses, laying hens, pigs and a ‘house beef animal”). Most of the work on the farm is done with rare breed draft horses. The farm has 11 acres of woodlot and 70 acres under production, (7 of these produce for the CSA garden) and a house and farm buildings built by Ken and Martha using traditional materials and methods as well as contemporary, energy-conscious design. It is an organized and efficient working farm that, upon first view, may strike the urban eye as a picturesque, frozen-in-time pastoral utopia.

According to Ken, their farm underwent “many evolutions” after the couple began farming in 1979; this included periods of growing peaches, grains, Christmas trees, and strawberries for retail sales, all with varied levels of success and satisfaction. The CSA “garden”, begun in 1986 as a small side project selling produce to a few friends to help fund their daughter's post-secondary education, had grown to over 220 member-families and a waiting list by its eighteenth season in 2014. While Ken and Martha also raise and train Suffolk Punch horses to sell, and offer three-day Draft Horse Workshops that teach

people to work with heavy horses, the primary business enterprise on the farm is now the CSA project.

While CSAs tend to have widely varying payment arrangements, here, in the winter people pay a \$50 deposit to hold their place and by May most people have paid in full for the season. During the year of my research the cost was \$550 for weekly shares from early May to the end of October, which roughly works out to less than \$25 per week over the season. For people who have no trouble paying this sum of money all at once, this CSA actually is quite affordable. The benefits of the CSA model, as outlined above, are apparent in this arrangement. For Martha and Ken, it means cash up front for seeds and supplies and a guaranteed market for their produce; for members, it means that ‘direct connection’ to their food and also to the farmers. About a third of the members purchase a “working share” at a reduced cost (\$50 less than the regular membership). These members agree to contribute the labour of two adults for two and a half hours twice during the season. The work assigned to them will depend on the needs of the particular work day. Beyond the help of these ‘working share’ clients, the couple have engaged the assistance of seasonal apprentices since 1996. In 2003 Orchard Hill became a part of the Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (or CRAFT) network of Ontario farms, a group that facilitates internships in what they term “ecological farming”. Each year a new group of international applicants vies for a coveted place on this farm where they exchange labour for room and board and training in organic farming and working with draft horses. By 2017, nearly 60 young interns had passed through the farm's training programme, many from outside of Canada, and many who went on to establish their own farm projects.

Conclusion

In the mid-1960s in the Southwestern Ontario town of St. Thomas, a trip with my mother to get groceries (excluding dairy, which was still being delivered in bottles to the door of our home) included visits to one of several bakeries, the small butcher and grocery owned by two brothers, and the farmers' market across the street from it. This arrangement, of course, was poised to change rapidly as the grocery chains of the time (Loblaws and A & P) moved into town. Today, much is revealed in the fact that the old grocer's building now houses the local food bank, a "temporary measure" initiated by local churches during a period of recession and rising unemployment in the mid-1980s. This food bank continues to assist an average of 800 individuals per month in 2017 (The Caring Cupboard Food Bank). The farmers' market, established in 1878 but closed for a length of time in the 1980s and 1990s, is once again filled with farmers and shoppers on Saturday mornings (perhaps carrying a coffee obtained from a nearby Fair Trade [Central American 'local'] coffee importer and roaster). As mentioned above, several CSA operations, as well as a number of greatly expanded farm stand businesses have relatively recently become part of the 'alternative' food context in the Orchard Hill area. These range from small organic box pick-up or delivery operations (such as Bee Loved Gardens CSA and Common Ground CSA) to an organic grocery and produce market that sprung up briefly in a former highway farm market before evolving into an urban vegan restaurant and 24-hour vegan burger drive-through called 'Globally Local'. In the same time frame, the selection of food marketed as 'organic', 'artisanal' and 'local' in area

grocery stores has greatly increased.

What does the CSA model offer that distinguishes it from this growing array of ‘alternative’ foods currently found both outside and inside supermarkets? There is no single answer. When looked at more closely, this question appears to encompass complex desires linked in different ways to questions of consumer choice, health, environmental sustainability, and individual and communal well-being. My ethnographic study of Orchard Hill suggests that what emerges in conversations time and again is the relevance of relationships to food, farmer, and farm. At the core of these relationships is what I have labelled the idea of “re-enchantment,” which at the level of the individual takes on a slightly different, although related, emphasis to what Max Weber called the “disenchantment of the world” brought about by modernity. Writing in the early twentieth century, Weber suggested that

Our age is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization, and above all, by the disenchantment of the world. Its resulting fate is that precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have withdrawn from public life. They have retreated either into the abstract realm of mystical life or into the fraternal feelings of personal relationships between individuals. It is no accident that our greatest art is intimate rather than monumental. Nor is it a matter of chance that today it is only the smallest groups, between individual human beings, pianissimo, that you find the pulsing beat that in bygone days heralded the prophetic spirit that swept through the great communities like a firestorm and welded them together (2004: 30).

The “rationalization and intellectualization” pursued by industrial agriculture throughout the twentieth century provided vast amounts (and a large variety) of agricultural products to North American consumers. Despite this continuing bounty of available foodstuffs, we have lately seen a growing demand for local and/or organic produce, as well as an interest in things such as the slow food movement, and artisanal

food. This suggests that while there has been a supposed retreat from “sublime values” in food (to the point of highly processed products such as Pringles or Wonder Bread), then there has also been a corresponding renewed search for such values in “alternative” or “craft” forms of food production and preparation. Orchard Hill, I suggest, is a site where something akin to these “sublime values” are being sought in sustenance, community, and place (or food, farmer, and farm) and this is expressed, directly or indirectly, by the members I interviewed. Re-enchantment here is defined as a personal search for meaning: food that is meaningful, experiences that are meaningful, and relations that are meaningful. However, this does not mean that consumption within the industrial food system is meaningless and involves passive consumers devoid of agency. Daniel Miller’s work, in particular, has focussed on how production and consumption are intimately linked and how it makes no sense to emphasize one above the other. Consumers are not passive dupes, but have agency that affects production. For Miller, consumption itself is meaningful in that it is at the foundation of social relations; to consume is to create culture:

Mass goods represent culture, not because they are merely there as the environment within which we operate, but because they are an integral part of that process of objectification by which we create ourselves as an industrial society: our identities, our social affiliations, our lived everyday practices (Miller 1987:215).

Therefore, I am not suggesting that consumption outside of Orchard Hill Farm is meaningless for CSA members. Coming to the farm is but one aspect of a multi-pronged strategy of consumption, just one choice through which people construct identities. That consumers have an effect on production in the industrial food system is evident in the fact that large grocery chains have responded to the demand for healthy, organic, and local

food. However, while members continue to purchase food in mainstream grocery stores, they come to Orchard Hill to experience a closeness with food, farmer, and farm that is at the heart of what I am calling “re-enchantment” – something they do not find at the grocery store. The next chapter will explore how this ‘re-enchantment’ is critically linked to notions of scale as related to production, spatial proximity, and social connection.

Chapter 2

Growing “Re-Enchantment”

“People went to the city but home is still back on the farm...”

(Island Green, 2013)

Chapter 2 begins to consider how the farm is imagined and experienced by its consumers, owners and apprentices. The first section provides an overview of the history and imaginings associated with of the landscape around Orchard Hill. The second section discusses how perceptions of the farm’s scale of production and the ways people imagine the farm can lead to “re-enchantment” or what participants consider meaningful interactions. In the last section, I provide some ethnographic examples of how members spoke to me about their experiences at Orchard Hill Farm.



Fig. 2 *Orchard Hill Farm looking north towards house, barns, and pick-up area*
(Photograph by author)

2.1 Framing Orchard Hill: History and Images of the Rural

Consumer's experiences of Orchard Hill Farm are informed by circulating images and understandings of the rural. Yet landscapes such as those surrounding Orchard Hill are composed of a vast array of matter, humans, and non-humans, all of whom are constantly changing. In the geological sense, the space here has undergone dramatic changes over time. Fruit Ridge Line, on which the farm is situated, follows a slope created by the deposits of receding glaciers of the Late Wisconsin period (85,000 to 11,000 years ago), a glaciation that radically impacted the continental geography north of Ohio. The resulting gravel deposits on this piece of land, Ken explained to me, provide excellent drainage and make this piece of land ideal for cultivation. Although geological history might seem beyond the scope of what we actually see as we traverse the fields outside Sparta, keeping such long-term changes in mind challenges notions of an originating stability that is endemic to heritage preservation, particularly where tourism is at stake (Massey 2006).

The village of Sparta, it should be noted, draws visitors precisely because it preserves substantial parts of its nineteenth-century streetscape. The settlement was founded by a member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) who came to the Niagara region from Pennsylvania in 1789. Jonathan Doan purchased 200 acres of "wilderness" here in 1813 (the word used on a commemorative plaque that stands outside the village cemetery) and later, as a land agent for the Crown, recruited other Quakers from Niagara and Pennsylvania during a period in which much of the land in this region was surveyed and settled. The Quaker Settlement, or Yarmouth Corners, grew up around

the farm, mill, and tannery that Doan established. This community took on the name of Sparta in 1832 (Ontario Heritage Trust). The Orchard Hill website (<http://www.orchardhillfarm.ca/>) calls attention to the fact that “Martha is the sixth generation of her family to steward this land.” Orchard Hill Farm has been developed on a property that has been occupied by the members of the same family since the forest growth here was first cleared. It is very personally linked to settlement in the area, showing its rootedness in the community.

Landscapes and places, however, have layered histories. Robert Leslie Jones’ 360 page *History of Agriculture in Ontario 1613-1880* (1946) devotes a mere 15 pages to what he calls “Agriculture Before the Loyalists”. While claiming that the Loyalists of Southern Ontario “inherited scarcely anything directly from the Indians who preceded them” he does admit that “the agriculture of the aborigines deserves attention” (5). Jones outlines the effective and varied cultivation practices of various Ontario native groups, including an impressive list of both cultivated and gathered resources including corn, squash, beans, sunflowers, nuts, fruits, berries, and maple sap. After mentioning the ways native agricultural knowledge was shared with the French post-contact, he concedes that “though none had quite reached the stage of being sedentary agriculturists, [using the prevalent cultural evolutionary thinking of the time] they had done remarkably well considering their lack of draft animals and of implements” (8). Although this aspect of the region’s history and present tends to be unacknowledged by many, and ignored by others, connections to the lives of the Neutral Confederacy (or the Attawandaron) and their interactions with land, plants and animals in this region are literally “harvested” as stone points that are periodically uncovered in the fields at the farm.

The complex native history of this region is also usually overlooked in recent tourism-related material that frequently depicts the Ontario countryside as a timeless and natural (unchanging) landscape. Certain features of the Ontario rural landscape often take centre stage – among them, the patchwork pattern of fields, oxblood-red hay barns, and long and straight roads through undulating hills. In order to promote food and agri-tourism in the province, these scenes are associated with a rustic and charming way of life, a life lived closer to the land and nature, a more “authentic” life that, by implication, must mean more “authentic” food. For instance, the passages below appear in an advertising publication for the Southwest Ontario Tourism Corporation that was funded by the Government of Ontario:

Itinerary No. 1: Rural Roots

Step back in time by travelling down the back roads, country lanes and rolling hills that make up Oxford County and surrounding area. It is here where you will see, touch and taste the bounty of the land. Meet farmers and chefs who are committed to all things local and artisanal; learn about the historical significance as Canada's Dairy Capital and participate in a culinary experience that is reminiscent of the area's rural roots.

Itinerary No. 5: Bounty Trail

As culinary tourists, we seek out one-of-a-kind foodie experiences that are so authentic you can't imagine them being anywhere else. If that's what you're after, you are in for a treat in this special part of Ontario's Southwest. The biological diversity and vast mosaic of natural areas, including open waters, wetlands and lush farmlands, make this area one of the most agriculturally productive regions in the country. With that comes a passion for all things local and authentic.

Although lush farmlands, country lanes and back roads across rolling hills are connected to authentic experiences and a “step back in time,” these elements of the rural landscape are the concrete reminders of social, historical, and physical processes that brought major changes to land in this area.

Much of the enduring stability of the countryside projected onto the region has an

origin in a settler history which informs the tourist industry of the region and the perceptions people have of “local history”. (For instance, in one interview a mother explained to me that she had joined the CSA because she wanted her daughter to have a sense of the “*agricultural roots*” that she came from.)



Fig. 3 *Orchard Hill Farm looking south toward Lake Erie* (Photograph by author)

As discussed in Chapter 1, the physical outline of Orchard Hill Farm is a product of a history of surveying and clearing that was based on very specific notions of productivity and of distribution of space, a history now firmly inscribed on the province’s land, but a history that is very brief in terms of the geological and human scale mentioned above. How does this impact on notions of space and place at Orchard Hill? Agricultural space in Ontario was partitioned using particular techniques and technologies that have

histories of their own as part of an overt colonial project. The supposed stability of the countryside, and its very construction as a “natural” landscape in opposition to urban and globalized modernity play an important role in how place and community are imagined and experienced at Orchard Hill.

2.2 “*More than Shopping*”

Imagining, in concert with perceptions of scale, is crucial in establishing what I call the “re-enchantment” that members find by “connecting” with the farm. The allusion I make is to Max Weber’s notion of “disenchantment of the world,” which, expressed in very simple terms, described the march of modernity as it replaced religion and superstition with science (Weber 2004:30). As pointed out in Chapter 1, a profound effect of this centuries-long process of disenchantment (or secularization) is that the “ultimate or sublime values have withdrawn from public life” (30). Such a disenchanted world is a world without “meaning.” This is useful for understanding how industrial and civic agriculture are repeatedly framed, particularly by advocates of the latter. In this interpretation, civic (or alternative) agriculture has emerged as an attempt to produce food that has been “meaningfully” grown; that is, food that rejects the industrial drive for homogeneity, consistency, and quantity that seems to have left other (enchanted) attributes to the side. In this understanding of such an opposition, *industrial* is connected to large size, anonymous producers, distance, etc., while *alternative* or *civic* is linked to small size, individual farmers, closeness, etc.

The 2014 Orchard Hill Farm Application for CSA Garden Membership (offered as

a glossy paper brochure or an online file found on the website) emphasizes what Ken and Martha identify as meaningful aspects of their CSA. The brochure promises: *“Locally grown food, helping to preserve the family farm and giving you the security of knowing where your food comes from.”* Under a half-page photo of one of the farm’s fully planted fields against a treed backdrop in high summer, some points are further outlined: *“Fair prices for both you and the farmers. Healthy food, soil, and people. Money staying within the community. Fresh, organically grown produce.”* Inside the brochure, what a CSA is and how the model is played out at this farm is described in more detail, and the reader is told that the CSA welcomes “involvement on the farm at whatever level suits you.” In the brochure’s description of CSA as a popular North American movement, there is a stress on a lost link between people and food. *“Through CSAs, people are claiming back a connection to the production of their food,”* it reads, and, *“Consumers get back in touch with where their food comes from...”*. Within the text there is also a mixed basket of themes to think about: support for local farmers and the local economy, family values and heritage, trust and food security, health, cultural connection to food, environmental issues, and community.

Based on my observations, my interviews with CSA members and workers, and my own experiences as a member, Orchard Hill Farm is without a doubt an excellent and reliable source of organic, fresh, “local,” high-quality produce created through sustainable farming methods and offered at a reasonable price—everything the brochure promises the consumer. Martha and Ken have kept up their side of the arrangement admirably over many seasons while continuing to learn, teach, innovate, and grow their business. But I would argue that members here buy and consume more than produce, and

certainly more than a merely material lack of pesticides; I maintain that they are seeking what they understand to be meaningful food, relationships, and experiences, through buying and consuming food, farmer, and farm or, as I have stated in Chapter 1, sustenance, community, and place.

I used the word “imagining” above because most members visit Orchard Hill only to pick up their share and perhaps to participate in the potluck picnic at the end of the season. Most years, Martha told me, only about a third of the total members have participated in the workshare aspect of the farm and the potlucks usually draw less than a quarter of the membership. So while most members have been on-farm and have an idea of what goes on there, by virtue of the touch-and-go nature of their stays, even for workshare participants, much of what is needed to keep the farm going remains invisible to them and can only be guessed at or imagined. Martha told me of one client who had exclaimed to her, “Oh, it’s just like ‘Little House On The Prairie!’ ” Jack, a senior apprentice who spent several seasons working on the farm, also spoke of his sense of what people perceived the farm to be. “It’s not like a living history exhibit that’s goin’ on here, it’s a modern farm...It’s not a throwback, no, not at all, but I think some people probably come here lookin’ for that.” Jack did see a good side to this perception of the farm, though. He went on,

That’s fine if it gets them out initially - at least then they’re open to that, open to things bein’ done maybe a little differently than they’re used to and then you can begin to educate them about, sort of, other issues that are involved. You know, what really goes on or what needs to happen in a farm like this...

In the interviews I conducted at Orchard Hill, “meaningful” food production and consumption seemed to be at the heart of a frequent opposition between industrial and

civic agriculture, and closeness to the food source (or the producer) played an important role in how these two systems were judged. For instance, Susan, a long-time member told me:

I think they are showing people that there are alternatives...there are sustainable alternatives...that we don't have to buy into this industrialized model that seems to have taken over everything...and just in the world, it seems like you don't have very much say or very much control over anything, and I really like how they quietly do this.

Capitalism stimulates the consolidation of enterprises at ever larger scales; this is even more the case in the age of globalization, when businesses compete across national boundaries for global markets. In agricultural terms, this means that crops cultivated or produced at industrial scales can be transported and sold in almost any part of the world. On the other hand, Orchard Hill, like other CSAs, operates at a relatively small scale: the food is grown, processed, and distributed on the farm itself. The owners, workers, and members at Orchard Hill often mentioned, or alluded to, such a binary, as in this conversation with Jack, the senior apprentice: “These corn and soybean guys - they’re not producing food. You can hear it off in the distance, right?” He pointed down the road where combines were operating that afternoon, saying:

They’re not producing food, it’s almost more like mining...whereas a place like this, it’s pretty obvious that they’re growing food, vegetables, and other things as well - we’re growing grain and producing meat and eggs. And we’re feeding, look, 220 shares this year on eighty acres. Eighty acres is not a big piece of land at all but it turns out you can feed quite a few people on that.

Like most analytical frameworks, this opposition is selective and emphasizes certain aspects and downplays (or “brackets”) others. The actual food system is, of course, much more complicated than analysis by scale alone could illuminate. Boundaries

are constantly being re-defined and contested. (See, Carolan 2005 on the changing state of sustainable agriculture since the 1950s). For example, large supermarkets have responded to the demand for “wholesome” food by introducing sections that offer organic, free trade, and other types of food formerly considered the purview of small stores catering to people who wanted ‘natural’ foods. And while the ‘natural’ and ‘organic’ food sector now involves industrial-scale enterprises, some of these products have links with small-scale producers and represent other (global) “locals” (for example, the sourcing of coffee from particular estates or small-farmer collectives). In addition, Orchard Hill itself is tied in to a larger economy, from which it consumes resources necessary to the farm’s functioning (for instance, implements, horse tack, seeds, and even apprentices). In other words, Orchard Hill is not a closed system; it is open and connected in many –sometimes subtle– ways to larger systems, which are, in turn, entangled with larger economic systems and infrastructures, such as the very modern network of roads that brings people to Orchard Hill in cars and the internet through which they communicate with clients. Furthermore, the farm is embedded in a global complex which bears on the farm’s functioning in myriad ways, from consumer trends to international connections with people and ideas; in the current age, no space is out of time or unaffected by translocal processes. The binary large-scale/small-scale, however, plays an important conceptual role in how different approaches to agriculture are assessed (and in spurring people such as Ken and Martha, and the consumers at Orchard Hill, to establish and sustain the CSA). Investigating this binary sheds light on the practices and social relations that constitute this particular farm and similar civic or “alternative” forms of agriculture and provisioning.

For example, within the larger panorama of agricultural practices in North America, Orchard Hill –and other CSAs– attempt to establish practices rooted in the circumstances of each particular farm. By this, I mean to convey the idea that the farm serves as a sort of laboratory or bounded place in which farm-specific practices, in tune with the needs of each day over the season, dictate the relations, associations, and working rhythms between people, animals, land, and plants. Behaviour and action on the farm is related to its small scale of operation– in fact, this scale permits certain ways of operation, trust, concern, hands-on interaction, etc., and plays a critical role in how Orchard Hill is understood of by its owners, and experienced and imagined by its members.

For many of the members –and for the farmers– a deep sense of disconnection with food, farm, and farmer inherent in the industrial system (and alluded to in the brochure discussed above) was seen to be counteracted by the civic approach. One apprentice talked to me about her understanding of the CSA model:

(I)t's bringing people to your farm. It's allowing them to have a connection to a place that is very special, the food is extremely intimate. And by letting the people come to your farm, that's getting them closer and making it much more of an experience. And I'd want it to be a very educational place, like, full of exposure, full of transparency, and allowing people to have a better connection and, like, empowerment within their own, like, food system.

In fact, Lyson's own definition of civic agriculture, quoted in the previous chapter, is built on a drastic opposition to industrial agriculture, construed as the epitome of a modern, rationalized food system in which food becomes a mere commodity. The undoubted bounty and consistency of industrial agriculture is accompanied by a distancing from the source: consumers are at the receiving end of a system that is largely

anonymous, even when the geographical origin of the foods is clearly labelled (water from Fiji, apples from Chile, etc.). Any immediate connection with its source is generally lost in the process. Opacity in food consumption (*What particular place or farm does the food come from? Who produces it?*) is in large part an effect of scale, although some large-scale businesses stress personalized connections with producers. For instance, in the coffee industry, “fair trade” and coffee sourced from particular estates may indicate not only ethical practices and ‘quality’, but also the connection of crops with particular farmers and particular places, connections that make such coffee seem more ‘artisanal’ and less a product of large-scale anonymity. (Of course, there are contradictions inherent in the mass marketing of products which are framed as alternatives to exploitative international trade relationships. (See, for example, Lyon 2006, Cole and Brown 2014, Reynolds 2002.)

I found that Orchard Hill members’ perceptions of the farm, as related to notions of place, community and trust, added *value* to the food purchased there in ways that go beyond mere sustenance, a value that, for many, transformed the transactions at the farm into something more than the mere acquisition of groceries. I argue that many people come to Orchard Hill Farm not just to pick up their weekly vegetables, but like some people might visit a site such as Stonehenge –to “be in touch” with something weighted with what they feel is of mystical importance. People’s relationships to the farm (including my own) have an irrational, outside-of-reason dimension that is bound up with things which appeal to the senses (and participation at any level here definitely involves the senses through sight, taste, smell, touch, and sound). For instance, the craft involved in the buildings at this site or the “rustic” appeal of a farmer in a straw sun hat driving a

team of draft horses may or may not directly relate to the taste or quality of the food produced here but they are attached to it by the consumers, as is the idea of community, even when that “communification” is largely carried out at an imagined level. People find enchantment and “magic” here that set Orchard Hill apart from their interactions at some other food supply venues where there is often a dry, scientific, nutrient or efficiency-based approach to food or a focus on an economically efficient exchange (such as at a large supermarket where double-ended checkouts are meant to quickly funnel customers and their goods out of the store). There is a value-added *something else* attached to the food purchased at this CSA that I argue is derived from the sense that “important things” that have been swept away in a rationalized, efficiency- and quantity-oriented industrial food system are seemingly found again in the produce, place, and people that give “meaning” to Orchard Hill. This was all exemplified by the observation of a mother who was reflecting on the cost of the CSA membership in relation to their family food budget: *“It’s more than shopping, though, it’s kind of like it’s part of the fabric of our life...”*

2.3 Pilgrimage and Experience

*“Let’s go to Sparta
They’ll cook us dinner
From the farm that we saw
All summer
Brimming over
Field of clover
Yellow side road”*

—Jennifer Castle, lyrics, “Let’s Go To Sparta”

The journey to the farm itself contributes to a notion of “pilgrimage” to a place

that for many has the look of a rural idyll. Due to its distance from nearby urban centres, (approximately 40 km from London, 13 km from St. Thomas, and 18 km from Aylmer) all of the members of Orchard Hill CSA arrive by car to pick up their weekly share, so that entering the space of Orchard Hill plays an important role in how members interact with the source of (at least some of) their food. During this study, the majority of the members travelled across county lines from the nearby city of London (population 370,000) and its environs, and all of the members came from within a 50km limit. When discussing who makes up the membership at Orchard Hill, Martha said with frustration; “This area has been slow to catch on to CSA. It is ridiculous that we are servicing people from so far away and not our immediate neighbours.” Early on, they chose not to develop a delivery system with the CSA because it was “not environmentally friendly,” yet cars (and the infrastructure that serves them) have ended up playing a large role in the functioning of their operation. In fact, on pick-up days, at times the number of cars maneuvering for space on the single-lane driveway and in the gravelled area by the house is difficult to manage, especially with animals, people, and children going about. Over an eight hour stretch on each pick-up day, 110 families arrive, which works out to 13.75 vehicles per hour –except that people tend to arrive at the same times –the beginning or the middle of the pick-up day. It is not unusual to encounter a dozen or more vehicles (parked, coming or going) as you pull into the laneway.

While a few people spoke to me of carpooling or partnering with other members to alternate pick-up duties and reduce fuel consumption, and many included environmental concerns as part of their reason for joining the CSA, it became clear to me that, for many, the car trip to the farm was more than a requirement. It was “an occasion,”

as one man called it, that they did not want to miss. Another woman also expressed a similar sentiment: “For me it’s an occasion to go. I know we’re busy and have to do stuff but I try not to live my life like that. I try to slow down and actually see the people that I’m in contact with. I like to do that. It just makes me feel better about my life.”

“People make an outing of it; they can come, their children like coming, their parents like coming, their grandparents like coming!” Maureen, one of the apprentices observed. A woman whose children had gone to university, meaning she and her husband needed less food, said: “We could manage without it because you could buy things in other places but I would feel like something was terribly missing in my life if we didn’t have it, I’d feel the experience was missing.” In fact, in many of my interviews people spoke of an “experience” that differed immensely in many aspects from their grocery store interactions, one that often entailed a sense of closeness and connectedness with people, space, food, and animals.

A woman who had been a member since the very first season was drawn to the farm not only by the high quality food and her physical involvement in the workshare aspect, but by her connection with Ken and Martha:

“To be perfectly honest, sometimes I don’t always use all the food. I try to use it all, I give it away sometimes... I know if I stop [supporting Ken and Martha] there are people in line waiting, so I know that, now, that doesn’t matter anymore. They don’t really need me, but I would miss going there and seeing them...”

She also enjoyed spending time working with the apprentices in the field.

“I was down there helping to plant lettuce all morning - you know, transplant lettuce, and one of my favourite things about the CSA is meeting the apprentices and getting to know them. It was a real pleasure just talking to them finding out what they’ve been doing, what their hopes are, you know.”

Kevin, a male participant, had never done the workshare, yet he felt that actually going to the farm was an important aspect of his membership: “I love going out there and actually seeing what they are doing, the mechanics of what they are doing...I really feel that what they are doing, they’re providing far more than just providing food.” A member who had done the workshare for many seasons, also attached importance to the opportunity to be on-farm: “...(I)t’s lovely to be outside. Today was a gorgeous day, a lovely morning, I spent it out there on my hands and knees in the dirt. So it’s important to me, yeah. It’s a beautiful spot.” She went on to say, “I have friends [in New Brunswick] who belong to a CSA and they would go to a mall parking lot and meet the farmer there at a certain set time –I don’t think they ever saw the farm. (This is) a beautiful farm – they’ve done such a beautiful job.”

Marla, an apprentice, also expressed how she felt not only this farm but the CSA model itself promoted feelings of connection to people and place.

Ken and Martha enjoy the connection they have with their customers or their shareholders or whatever it’s called, but it’s like – people, and especially through this whole food movement, people have this, it’s like it’s their farmer. It’s like, at the farmer’s market, they have their farmer and they are very loyal and I think that a CSA heightens that to a whole new level and it’s like, people are like, “This is my farm” and that’s very nice.

Kevin, who happened to arrive one day when the kale bin was empty, described a very personal experience that stood out for him:

I knew this would upset (my wife) and I said, “Martha is there any kale?” And she was like, “Oh yes, yes, there is...” and she grabs a bucket, I open my trunk, in goes the bucket, down we drive down to where the kale is (and I hadn’t really seen the kale - it’s fantastic, like a beautiful row of kale!) and she goes in (and it had rained earlier and was very mucky – otherwise I would have gone in with her) -and she went in and...cut, cut, cut, cut, cut...and she cut a whole bunch of kale and back up we went and I selected my quantity and away I went. And it was a kind

of personal thing! Martha is just so generous with time, with whatever, and she always seems so calm...

One father spoke at length about memories of visits to the farm as his daughter was growing up, describing experiences that he connected with being on the farm.

(F)eeding the pigs that was like a thing, you know... (my daughter) would always want to do that. 'Let's go feed the pigs, get the greens'. I know Sarah loves to go out there because she's gone there since she was little. Like, it's something that she likes to do; she likes to be in that spot, go look at the animals, go drive down the lane.

Susan, a woman whose children had come to the farm with her when they were younger, speculated that others might find this type of connection a reason to join the CSA: *"If you have a family, to take your children there and see the horses and just have a kind of a closeness with them..."*

The man who felt they provided more than food at Orchard Hill described picking up vegetables when the first fall season CSA was offered in the downstairs room of the apprentices' bunkhouse.

One day we were in there and there were all these chicks and we put our hands in with all these chicks and they were like, you know, all over and you could grab three or four chicks at once, you know, and it was...I mean, obviously washing hands afterwards was very important, but it was really awesome! I mean, you don't forget that – sure, you might see chicks in incubators, you know, in a science class –that kind of clinical thing– but this was just, like, a handful of chicks and that whole experience having them all cheeping around... and that was pretty... you know, it's kind of a spiritual thing...

This man, in fact, connected the farm and what he saw there to a contemplative spirituality: *"I think just going out there is spiritual...just being in that space is nice...looking at the house or driving in and looking at the cow, or seeing a little bit of the chickens..."*A mother of three also associated a 'spiritual' feeling with her involvement over years at the farm, but on a more abstract level: *"I would really like to say that this*

has so powerfully influenced my children. So, for me that's spiritual as a mother to know that they are looking after themselves and that they are looking after the environment. This has really changed their worldview, I think."

For Helen, a retired teacher who was involved with peace activism, her existing worldview made being a member at the farm a good fit.

My goal was to be a teacher that could inspire the children I worked with to become more caring people about the earth. This is really totally all up my alley. I've read all kinds of books about living better on the earth, more gently on the earth...As a teacher I used to take my kids out there on field trips and they would have a little tour of the farm and how organic farming is done.

This same woman had joined the Sparta Friends Meeting a couple of decades before and connected her involvement at the farm with those beliefs. "One of the testimonies of Quakers is simplicity and it seems an aspect of simplicity is getting your food close to home," she said.

Maria, a woman who had recently become a vegan, admitted to being "a little mystical" when she spoke of how the animals (including the pigs raised for meat) had a better life on this farm "versus the life of deprivation that most animals live. You ingest that, that becomes a part of your body if an animal has lived this life of misery and, I don't know, I just don't want to think of that being a part of my DNA...like the suffering, do you want to eat something that suffered that much." Like the woman above who talked about having a "closeness" with the horses, this person and her husband also clearly felt they were making the type of 'connections' discussed in the brochure, not only with farmers but in their encounters with farm animals:

Maria: *I love it that Martha and Ken have the eggs there and you know, you can say that "I know the chickens that have laid those eggs".*

Kevin: *...and they hang out...*

Maria: ...and you can see them pecking and clucking and they're not in a cage and their bodies aren't bearing the weight of them and you just, oh, my goodness, it just makes me sick to think about what's going on out there and how most people don't even have an awareness of it and you just go and buy the cellophane-wrapped package and you bring it home and you eat it and you don't think about it - everything's so mindless...

Kevin: We liked to buy the sausages there when we were eating it [meat], and eggs too, and we do still, periodically, if they're Ken's eggs because they're different somehow, then.

Maria: We're acquainted with those hens, we feel.

When asked about their experience as working share participants in the CSA, people frequently spoke of the therapeutic value of the work itself. "When I'm picking raspberries, you know, I'll just be talking [to other workers] about what's on my heart..." one woman said to me,

...kind of bypasses the whole 'let's think about this, let's make sure we're not saying anything...', just metred out or whatever. It's just more of a relaxed kind of flow-of-consciousness conversation and that could be a therapeutic benefit because there are not really a lot of places where you can do that, right? It's kind of meditative that way...I find it is, anyway...



Fig. 4 Apprentices and members digging potatoes in southeast field at Orchard Hill Farm (Photograph by author)

I often found the work relaxing and meditative myself, no doubt because of the

repetitive nature of many of the tasks, but also because of the relative quiet of the setting, removed from the road and usually from industrial sounds. (There is, however, occasionally noise from a nearby dragster raceway which, interestingly, accentuates both the contrast and the blurring of boundaries between the rural aura of the farm and the mechanical-industrial atmosphere that lies “outside”.) One hot day, I sat in the shade of some pine trees performing one such repetitive task with Matthew, a retired high school teacher. There were several bushel baskets of garlic and we were unhurriedly trimming stems and roots and smoothing off any loose papery covering from the bulbs while we talked. Matthew said he always looked forward to workshare days because it helped him relax, giving him a break from the daily difficulties of caring for his infirm spouse. “The work and the conversation takes my mind off of other things.” he said.

One July morning during an extended heat wave, I found myself walking down to the field in the cool of the early morning with Cindy, a member from Tillsonburg, a town almost 45 kilometres east of the farm. The lettuce and mesclun were temporarily “heat tired” as Jack, who was organizing things that morning explained, and we were sent to cut arugula, and fill buckets with sunflowers, while two other members picked purple beans and cut broccoli. Cindy told me that she had been a workshare member for three years but initially she had been reluctant to commit the time. “But later I realized it was actually very little time that they asked you for and I really enjoy coming to work.” She told me that she “always left more relaxed” than she came. Lydia, a woman who said she had grown up on a farm and missed that lifestyle, said of her workshare: “Oh, it’s my therapy, for sure, and it reminds me of those days.”

On one occasion when late-season raspberries were available for picking, I

encountered a visibly upset woman filling a quart basket among the arching canes. I had not met her before but we cautiously started up a conversation as I began to fill my containers a few yards away. She ended up telling me that she was “heartbroken” because that very day she had left her mother in a nursing home for the first time. She had come immediately to the farm to “find some peace about it” and to gather some fragrant berries for her mother, who had always loved to come raspberry picking with her there. The setting, the act, the memories, and an encounter with a sympathetic ear (I had also seen Martha giving her a hug outside the pick-up room earlier) all made it clear that this woman’s experience at the farm, like others’, went far beyond an economic transaction for food.

One cool, but sunny afternoon in late August, I was put to work washing and rinsing mesclun under the lean-to roof behind the house, filling picnic coolers with the greens and stacking them in the insulated walk-in shed. Three other women were also helping that day, one a visitor from B.C., tagging along with her host, Diane, who was a CSA member. (Extra help is never turned away.) Diane told me that she loved to come there and work even though she had a garden and chickens of her own on a property outside of Aylmer where she and her husband rented land to farmers. She enjoyed the company and the experience, she said, and identified having children as the impetus for searching out better quality food. The other woman, Sheila, another former high school teacher, had her two pre-teen children with her that day. They happily filled tomato boxes with Martha, accompanied an apprentice to the barn to feed a barrow of vegetable scraps to the pigs, and chatted and worked along with the adults. They were home-schooled, like my children had been, and their mother considered the work-share days an important part

of their learning experience, much like I had. Unlike my family, however, they were part of a large number of homeschoolers in the area who focus on what she called “Bible-based learning”. She told me that they had decided to participate in the CSA so that the children would have “knowledge of their Creator” and “an appreciation of God’s gifts.” For this woman, the farm was “enchanted” in a literal, religious sense. The site was self-evidently meaningful for her and special enough to be used to convey her beliefs to her children.

A spiritual experience and religion are by definition an expression of *enchantment* and, in Martha and Ken’s case, as we will explore further later, their Quaker beliefs underlie this whole process --from spring seed propagation, preparing the land with their horses, planting and harvesting with apprentices and CSA members, preparing and displaying their offering in the pick-up room, to their interactions with people as they collect their shares of the labour. Martha and Ken had explained to me one evening that the two basic tenets that Friends who gather at the nearby Meeting House share are: “Religion is about the whole of life” and “True religion leads to respect for the earth and all life upon it”. “Quakers believe that what you do is more important than what you say.” Ken told me.

Susan, a member who was also involved with the Sparta Friends Meeting expressed that she felt the CSA was definitely a “spiritual experience for Ken and Martha, where they really feel like they are nurturing people in a way, providing a product that is not just a product. It’s like *love in a tomato* or something like that,” she said.

Even these few examples show that for many people the “pilgrimage” to Orchard

Hill is undoubtedly about “more than shopping”. People spoke of connection with farmers and with other people, with food, with soil, with animals, and with their own sense of spirituality. They also spoke of the therapeutic value of the work and the space. For some, it is a healing space, and for others it is a place for teaching children and experiencing with them something of the aforementioned connections. I argue that the clients bring some of the “*re-enchantment*” which they associate with the farm, home to their dinner tables, some of the “*magic*” that is missing from the hygienic and antiseptic spaces of a supermarket, some knowledge of things hidden by industrial-scale processing and rationalization.

Chapter 3

Closing The Distance

3.1 “*The closer we can get to home the better*”: Place and The “Local”

*“Thing about morning is
There’s not so many people up
There’s lots of space in it
and the way the light comes pouring in through barn doors
is like god calling...”*

– (*Feed the Soil*, Tanya Davis)

In Chapter 3, I will explore three notions that are linked to how many Orchard Hill members experience the farm: the “local”, community, and trust. The label “Community Supported Agriculture” itself incorporates these categories (community is referenced directly, but how does a community support such agriculture without a strong connection to a place (the local) and a certain idea of trust that is inherent in what is generally meant to be a community?). A thread that connects these three issues (the local, community, and trust) is that of *scale*: I argue that the small operational scale on which Orchard Hill Farm operates plays an important role in how the members perceive the food that they receive. I will begin by exploring how people I interviewed intertwine “place” and “the local.” This is an important point because the “local” has become a positive value in food marketing. By stressing food produced “over here” (wherever that may be), as opposed to “over there,” what is being implied is that what is being sold as “local” is “better” in one or more ways to what is from “somewhere else.” Closeness is implied to be good in itself, but different usages can create confusion over where the “local” actually is (and how

large it is).

For many of its members, however, Orchard Hill is not only a venue for purchasing “local” foodstuffs. I maintain that members establish a relational closeness to the farm that is not part of their “everyday” grocery shopping; it is a *place*, a location charged with meaning (Cresswell 2004:7). For instance, Brad and Paul, members who had recently moved to the area after living in Toronto for almost three decades, described their CSA experience on their blog about environmentally-minded living: *“Our farm is a magical, Eden-like place...”* it reads. *“It’s an amazing feeling being so connected to your food that you know exactly what field it’s being picked from and, if you’re lucky, you may have been the one picking it!”*

Cresswell borrows three attributes from geographer John Agnew to define “place” as a “meaningful location”: location, locale and sense of place (7). These three attributes locate place, respectively, in a distinct setting, with specific material qualities, and with particular “subjective and emotional attachment” (7). In the last part of Chapter 2 (“Pilgrimage and Experience”), I have already shown that the farm is repeatedly described as just such a meaningful location that seems to operate in diametrical opposition to what can be described as the larger, more abstract, and perhaps more “inhuman” space in which industrial agriculture operates. Like Brad and Paul, people go to the farm to visit *that* particular place, and not only to take home the food produced by Ken and Martha.

The frequent use of the term “local,” and the “localisms” that it supports, is an indicator of how important *place* is. Here, the idea of “the local” has played an important role in appealing to consumers’ sense of belonging to a determinate geographical area.

Food and the site of its production become symbolically charged as different actors try to define them, make value judgments, and promote particular visions of how and where food should be produced, marketed, or consumed. The word “local” has become a battleground upon which both small farmers and “big agriculture” have engaged in a struggle over representations of space and food. Alternative forms of food purchasing such as farmers’ markets, Community Supported Agriculture, food co-operatives, community gardens, organic “box” programmes, and eat-local movements stress their connections to particular locales. Supermarkets are also stressing “local” connections (for instance, my local Metro grocery store introduced labels in 2017 that mark locally sourced products such as *Las Chicas Coffee* and *Shaw’s Ice Cream*).

Advocating a *loyalty to the local* is generally an appeal to the emotions and to a sense of belonging. However, what constitutes “local” is not clearly defined; in practice, the term is a highly malleable and abstract notion that can be manipulated in order to attract consumers. An emotional response to “the local” is exploited by campaigns such as Foodland Ontario’s “Buy Local,” which taps into a feeling of provincial-/regional-“isms” (Foodland Ontario). In the globalized market in which food is embedded, the “local” has been stretched to include not only regional and provincial, but even national scales (where, for instance, apples produced in British Columbia are more “local” than those from the United States, even though the latter might have been harvested closer to the consumer). “The local,” therefore, is a highly charged notion that is abstract enough to be used (or misused) by different actors so as to take advantage of a certain closeness, implied by place, that elicits strong emotions. As Harvey has noted, “[p]laces are constructed and experienced as material ecological artifacts and intricate networks of

social relations. They are the focus of the imaginary, of beliefs, longings, and desires (most particularly with respect to the psychological pull and push of the idea of ‘home’)” (1996:316). The idea of the “local” is used to take advantage of these strong emotions, feelings, and beliefs that are inherent in “place,” and to tap into other feelings and beliefs (for example, nationalism).

The fluidity of this type of “local” is also used by the industrial food system to promote sales and goals that are, on the face of it, similar to those of alternative agriculture. “It’s good for the environment” is one of the answers given to the question “Why buy local?” on a Foodland Ontario webpage (Foodland Ontario), along with the rather general statement that “Ontario farmers take pride in being good stewards of the land, helping to preserve it for future generations.”

In answer to the question “What do you consider local?” many people I spoke with at the farm indicated the same roughly circular area where the distance of the radius was managed conveniently by car. This woman lived on the outskirts of St. Thomas:

I consider local the St. Thomas, Aylmer, Port Stanley area, over to London. We would go to London to the Western Fair Market, not very often, though. We go to the local market here in St. Thomas - not that often because we get just about everything we need from Ken and Martha.

Two married Orchard Hill members described a similar idea of “the local” as a region reached comfortably by car or other forms of transportation:

Maria: *We try to buy local. If we’re not doing the farm share we buy from Briwood (a St. Thomas farm market). One of our colleagues’ father supplies a lot of the apples from Blenheim and she always tells us – “My dad’s bringing a shipment in this weekend.” We kind of know the methods that he uses, as well - he’s kind of local within a hundred - that hundred mile thing –it is kind of arbitrary, isn’t it? I also buy things up in the Dutton area (about 40 km west of their home in St. Thomas) when I’m visiting family there. And roadside, I absolutely love roadside.*

Kevin: *We pick our own blueberries.*

Maria: *Yeah, we go to Bluegroves (a West Lorne berry farm about 55 km from St. Thomas). We've picked a lot and freeze them, about 18 pounds earlier in the season, and we like to do that and the quality is so much nicer than what you get from the grocery store.*

I asked them how important the idea of buying locally was to them.

Kevin: *It didn't mean as much until we started doing the CSA. For me, I don't think I really thought about it too much until then. Before, the food – it didn't matter where it came from. If I wanted a red pepper, I'll go get a red pepper. So, I guess the seasonal aspect and the local – we didn't really talk about that. But the element of getting the food when it's ready as opposed to going to the grocery store and getting the food from wherever regardless – I do all the shopping so I try to be more careful now about where the things come from. So, if you've got to get a pepper you try and make sure that it's local as opposed to Mexico or one that's travelled a bunch of miles. So lots of the stuff we get that is from around here is sort in the normal growing pattern but...*

Maria: *It's hard to do all year round. We do buy bananas and we always make sure that we buy organic bananas because of the pesticides. We know at least the grower or the person harvesting them isn't going to be subjected to as much chemicals, so it just seems like a little more responsible thing to do. The other things we get locally are the honey. My uncle did bee-keeping, too, and we get honey from Clovermead (an Aylmer area apiary). He also made maple syrup when I was little and I actually saw him making maple syrup on the wood stove growing up... and we always got our maple syrup from Brown's out in the Fingal area (about 15 km from their home) 'cause my family knew them. And so for year's we've been going to Crinklaw's (a maple syrup farm south of London), so that the kids could see the maple syrup being made, which is nearby, and that's important. And we would always buy the bigger quantity of it. And lately we would just buy the smaller from Palmer's (a Port Stanley area farm) at Briwood cause it's available.*

Kevin: *But it's still local. I guess I feel good about that, too.*

However, this couple went on to say that when it came to clothing, cars, and other consumables, buying from nearby places was often difficult and they often settled for items that were “Made In Canada”.

CSA members I spoke to seemed to recognize the problem use of the term “local”

as a marketing ploy that conceals reality. For instance, some members also identified other issues, such as the quality of the food or farming practices, that can be “papered over” by invoking “the local”. One member, whose parents had operated a highway farm market in the 1950s and 60s, recognized such an issue:

“In Briwood, if it says local tomatoes, I know that they were grown in a huge greenhouse - they might be somewhere nearby but, for me, tomatoes –local tomatoes– at this time of year, are from greenhouses, probably grown hydroponically and probably don’t have all that much nourishment compared to one that grows in a field organically and doesn’t travel a long way. For example, I really like to have tomatoes in my salad but this is the first winter that I’ve refused to buy them from Mexico.”

CSAs have been impacted by and have adapted to the ubiquity of and the flexible meaning of the “local. To address the problem of members usually having little choice about what is being offered on any particular week in a market saturated by other “local” produce, CSAs in Southwestern Ontario (and go-betweens who buy shares from them and re-sell them) have begun to adapt to the what consumers seem to want. (For example, Anne, an Orchard Hill apprentice who has developed her own CSA in the London area, has begun experimenting with a more flexible system in which clients can receive “credits” for more of the vegetables they want, when they want them.)

Certainly, the ubiquity of the “local,” and how it has been incorporated by the industrial food system poses a particular threat to small producers, because as the notion of the “local” expands, it loses some of its meaning, or power of attraction, for places such as Orchard Hill. However, as I have demonstrated in Chapter 2, there are many other reasons why this farm has retained its appeal as a concrete location –a place– worthy of a “pilgrimage”.

3.2 “A Reunion of Friends”: Visions of Community at Orchard Hill Farm

“COMMUNITY SUPPORT IS OUR PARACHUTE! And as it always has been, it’s there as needed. Because you cheerleaders and friends and family and “farmily” members of the farm and farmer(s) that have been there since the beginning, are truly the best. We’re so fortunate to be surrounded by such amazing kindness and generosity and encouragement. In low moments I might take for granted all the evidence of vegetable happiness growing in the fields, and all the things actually coming together nicely, if slowly, in this full life of ours... but never the wonderfulness of people that surrounds this little farmlet.”

–CSA blog entry by Anne, former Orchard Hill apprentice

Community is another idea that is either implicitly (as in civic agriculture) or explicitly (as in Community Supported Agriculture) connected to emerging forms of alternative agriculture. It was also, of course, a foundational concept of anthropology and sociology as they developed in the late nineteenth century. At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, sociologists described modern urbanization as a process that entailed a progressive specialization in all areas of life, and an urbanization in which the subject became an anonymous individual among many in the city; both conditions were seen as contrasting dramatically with the face-to-face relations of small communities (Simmel 1950; Durkheim 2004). However, amid its heterogeneity, the city also offered a wide range of possibilities to participate in many types of communities, although these are generally short-lived (Wirth 1938). Therefore, the idea and experience of community as an expression of strong (or at least common) bonds continues to be important in many areas of life.

With regards to food, for example, many operations that are marketed as alternatives to industrial agriculture consciously promote themselves as being grounded in and sustained by the communities they are embedded in, a strategy that Alan Warde has termed “communification” (1997:13). The “struggle for the local” described in the preceding section can take the idea of the community to the level of an imagined one, such as the Ontario-local implicit in the Ontario Foodland campaign. The notion of the “imagined community” is famously associated with Benedict Anderson (1983) who proposed that sentiments of communion among distant “strangers” inhabiting the same territory could be forged by the creation of things such as national literature, anthems, etc. that encouraged feelings of “shared traditions”. Such narratives have been used to underline community ties and values taken to be shared by the “nation,” but also implies the idea of competition among regions and nations, within a global food market.

A sense of belonging is also important for members of Orchard Hill but, by contrast, at Orchard Hill, the feeling of belonging grows out face-to-face interactions and shared ideals and involvement with others in a range of activities in place.

“Of course, we know how special this place is,” says Martha, over tea at the big kitchen table one evening, “but we are happy to, thankful to be able to share it with people.” Ken agrees. “The land is not ‘ours’ – we are stewards. We’re happy to share.” Martha speaks of the “energy” “positive expectation” and “enjoyment” that others bring to the farm and that they build on. “It is beneficial to us and to the place. There’s positive energy focussed here.” They recall their early experience with a pick-your-own-strawberry business that involved a thousand or more customers buying small quantities, with little interaction. Ken compares the CSA now to that business model and then to

large pig farms where outsiders are not allowed past the gate for animal health reasons. They also talk about selling certified organic grains for years but without knowing where it all went. “It was sold anywhere in the world.” Ken likes that they “get to talk to the people who eat the produce” now and calls it a “special relationship”. “They know us - we’re their farmers!,” he says with emphasis. I note that their slightly beat-up Toyota parked outside has a bumper sticker that says: “Know your food. Know your farmer.” and Jack, who is washing dinner dishes nearby, is wearing a shirt that says “Who’s your farmer?” Martha agrees that, especially with working share members, they “have a relationship that goes beyond casual.” She then surprises me by remembering when my youngest son had broken his arm at the age of four – an event I had almost forgotten about – and recalls when my husband returned to university studies as a mature student. She considers the time spent in the fields with members a time “to chat and to get to know people”.

In a blog entry (30 September 2012) describing the end of season potluck gathering, Martha has written: “It is very special to be able to form a community around the food that we grow and eat.” She elaborates on this sense of connection in another blog entry (23 May 2013), making clear that, through community, she enjoys a sense of ‘fulfillment’ that goes beyond an economic exchange:

It is always very satisfying to gather together the first of the produce we have been working so hard to produce and display it in the pick-up. Seeing returning CSA members is like a reunion of friends and welcoming new members into our food-centered community is a joyous occasion. Our apprentices feel a sense of accomplishment when they harvest the first of our crops, that they helped plant and nurture. It is impossible to communicate how much care, planning and preparation goes into the production of the spinach, spears of asparagus, heads of lettuce etc. we grow, using organic methods, starting with attention to soil

fertility and the love of our land, but when I see the bounty and taste it's goodness I am deeply fulfilled to know that we are blessed to be able to share it with so many families through our CSA.

Marla was an apprentice who had previous work experience taking produce to New York City's largest farmers' market. When I asked her if she thought people 'got to know their farmer' as the brochure read, she said:

Oh yeah, I feel like people know Ken and Martha and like them and Ken and Martha make it a point --even as big as they are now. But, hey, it's two hundred and fifteen people just for the summer and it's like, a lot of names and they're bringing their families and it's like...I can't remember your kids' names. But, I think Ken and Martha, as the farmers, they really get to know people and I think it's wonderful how different it is than a farmer's market. I think it's different in that people take it on as their own; people can come to the farm and, especially, they can come and work and do their shares. So, like I said, it ups their intimacy...

Martha spoke to me of being aware that people coming to the farm (even those just coming to pick up the frozen organic meat sold there by a former apprentice, she said) feel like they are "part of something," "involved in something bigger". The word *community* also was uttered frequently during my conversations with people about the farm. "I feel like I'm doing something that's good for the community, like, because it's community supported..." said one woman. Another said: "I feel what I'm doing is good for my body, good for my environment, good for my community. It's part of a whole package..." One London area member's blog about gardening and sourcing local food discusses her support of the Orchard Hill CSA. "Keeping farmers on their farms is of the utmost importance to our communal well-being," she writes.

Jack, a senior apprentice who had experience at another Ontario CSA and worked at this farm over several seasons said, "You get 'em all, right? Like some people just

kinda want to come and pick up and go on to the next thing they've gotta do that day; some people like to come and hang around and talk or just walk or pick flowers or pick berries if they're in season..." I asked him how well he got to know members and he replied:

Yes, some people I've gotten to know quite well, other people I don't know their names at all - but it's different here...When I was on the Toronto CSA scene, like, all I did was --you were at the pick-up, you weren't on-farm, so you were just there makin' sure people could find their stuff and just kinda knew what was goin' on. We had some other things for sale so, you're talking to everybody at some point and I got to know everybody's name by heart, like, after a few weeks. Whereas, here we'll get the pick-up ready and then we may go off and do something else and then not be up [from the field] for the rest of the day. Like, we'll take turns sort of manning the room...just because we're on-farm and there's always a million things to do. So it ended up being a little more face to face [in Toronto] just because you had nothin' else to do at the pick-up than talk to people and make sure they were makin' out okay."

While he didn't necessarily feel a sense of "community" always possible to achieve in this setting, Jack talked about feeling that *he* was part of a community after he had returned to the area after years of working in forestry on the West coast. "I've been able to, you know, plug into a community of other organic farmers, people in the area and Central Elgin and elsewhere, too, that's always been there."

One woman, who was "usually too busy" to attend the end of season potlucks, said, "I don't find the socializing at the pick-up all that important. Maybe it's because they have so many [clients] - they have two hundred people and when I go there, I would say rarely I've met the same people there." When I asked this person if she attempted to talk to other people in the pick-up room she said:

I don't talk. I'm not friendly. (She laughs.) It's not that I'm not friendly, I'm kind of shy. I don't know what to say to people, I don't really know what to say to people I don't know and often I'm in a hurry and I just want to get home with my

stuff.

Yet this same person felt that she had something in common with those she imagined were other members. “Obviously, you know you’re with... sort of like-minded people. I mean, I’m sure there’s a huge range of people who are CSA members but you know that they have some interest in...having an earth-friendly...life.”

A member who had never tried the working share option told me:

You know what’s really nice to know? The thing that makes me feel really happy is I don’t feel like we’re this really backward little community - it’s nice to know that there’s this whole network of people who are kind of forward thinking, maybe a little left-leaning, a little less than this narrow idea that I had of St. Thomas. We don’t really mix with a lot of people because we’re mostly working and it’s nice to know that there’s this whole group of people out there who share a similar set of values...and it’s good to know that...

Another long-term member also used a similar phrase that identified “a shared set of values,” while also saying that the social was not the most significant aspect of her membership. “So, I don’t really feel that the other people in the CSA are a big part of my community. It’s kind of in passing that I see them.”

One retired woman felt it was a place where it would be possible find people who shared certain ideas, but although she said she had met several key people in her life through the farm, she did not consider the community of members very important:

Maybe if I was younger and had a family it would be a place where you would meet like-minded people, but for myself I was probably in my late forties when they first started [the CSA] and I was, you know, my kids were finishing school or in university, so the farm wasn’t a meeting place for me in that way.

She returned to the subject later in the conversation:

But I’m thinking that if a farm like that, if this had existed twenty-five years ago and I had gone to the farm I would have also made those connections earlier in my life with people who were like me and I would

have found my way into a life that I could live. I can see that a CSA farm could be that, is what I'm saying, but that's not my experience because my life is established already and there's no room...(she laughs). No room for new people - not much, anyway.

Marla, the apprentice, considered what she witnessed at Orchard Hill to be some form of community.

I guess it's a community in the fact that it's, like, I have seen CSA members where it's like, "Oh yeah. I'm a part of this" and it's like they have created their own community within this farm. Like, this farm is a nice meeting place for people, people make an outing of it...

Like Jack, quoted above, Marla also recognized that she herself was part of another nested community:

I'm realizing that I live in these bubbles. Like, organic farmers, like, young organic or whatever, and we all kind of think the same and have the same friends and then I hop to another place and it's like, okay, I fit in here, that's why I want to be here --we have the same thoughts.

But she also spoke of what she called a 'disconnect' within the CSA model. "I watch the CSA members more than I have interacted and that gives me a really different perspective on what a CSA is and what I thought it would mean to be a CSA member... than what it actually has become..." She questioned the use of the word 'Community' in the CSA name, saying, "For me, it's like I would rather re-name it Crop Sharing Association because I feel like there's a big disconnect in this whole thing." As stated earlier, Marla did believe that Martha and Ken were making meaningful social connections with clients of the farm. However, like Jack, Marla felt her position as an apprentice made that less possible for her.

I feel it's like, the farmers' market, often if you go to the farmers market for ten years and have the same farmer, you ask a lot of questions. You ask if maybe you can come visit --most farmers do farm tours. I also felt that people get good connections that way. But for me as an apprentice here, it's like - we do a lot of labour, so I'm not always in the pick-up room and I'm only here this season, so even today [late in the season] CSA members came and I'd never seen them before.

Nevertheless, she did acknowledge that she had made some connections with people who came to the farm that summer.

I feel that there's some people, like you, and there's a select few other gems, people you really connect with. And people come back and you can just tell that there is something special - like with this [indicating the recorded interview], like it means something else to them...

But then she added, “Most of us float on, so as a CSA member, it’s like how invested are you and me, you know, really...personally. ‘Cause I’m just gonna float on, but this farm stays here and Ken and Martha stay here.”

As with the word ‘local’, I found that the definitions and boundaries of ‘community’ were shifting and ill-defined, at times seeming to refer to an immediate geographical area (“I mean, for the local community it creates a stronger economy,” said one person) and at other times seeming to describe a more abstract connection to a way of thinking about food. The idea of a close-knit group sharing a common purpose or goal is enticing, and for many Orchard Hill members such an idea seems to remain as a model, even if only in a vague and rather open-ended way. Martha, Ken, and some of the members at Orchard Hill have managed to establish closer ties forming a core community around the farm. Those members return to the farm, year after year, because the personal bonds they have formed are as important as (or more important than) the produce they receive. However, a sizable portion of members appear on the farm only on pickup days, and so these people come into contact with other members and the farm on a more touch-and-go basis. This suggests that they are then talking about a community of “like-minded people,” a community of interests, or a “food community”. Torbjörn Bildtgård’s term “alimentalities” (a portmanteau of “alimentary” and “mentalities”) (107) may best apply

here. Bildtgård considers that in our contemporary globalized world “social movements forming around common food agendas –such as vegetarianism, veganism, ecological food, the Stone-Age diet or health food– can be described as communities united by a common alimentality rather than by geography” (110). These are also largely imagined communities that show how in the modern world we can belong (and often do) to multiple and sometimes overlapping communities, which may not always be about face-to-face, “meaningful” interactions in place.

It is important to note that overlapping and at times contradictory conceptions of community co-exist at Orchard Hill. As was the case with “place” and “the local,” the notion of “community” at Orchard Hill seems to shift from the immediacy of face-to-face encounters to shared interests that are more widespread and even global (for example, concern about agricultural sustainability, healthy food, etc.). In this sense, the “community” in Community Supported Agriculture is perhaps the aspect about which members and apprentices were most ambivalent, as noted in some of the interviews above. The term itself (“community”) implies closeness, and although people were clearly seeking various forms of “closeness” with people, animals, land, and food, they did not necessarily seek “community”, particularly in the form of group activities such as the annual pot luck gathering.

3.3 Farmer’s Trust

Trust is another very significant aspect of what differentiates the Orchard Hill experience from that of a visit to one the many chain grocery stores one can find in

Ontario. As you pull a car off of Fruit Ridge Line into the graveled lane at Orchard Hill Farm there is no gate that could potentially restrict your entrance. This is perhaps the first physical hint of what I have identified as a vein of *trust* that informs many interactions on this farm.

The Orchard Hill CSA brochure describes the relationship between the members and the farmers: the consumer assumes a certain financial risk, with the understanding that the farmers will use all their skills to provide the best harvest possible each season. However, beyond this contractual idea I found a more complex system of trust flowing *between* consumers and farmers at Orchard Hill. Although it is often unarticulated, this trust is nevertheless part of an assumed code of conduct, or practice that is central to many of the activities and exchanges that occur on the farm.

There is a large body of literature on trust that covers topics such as the history of trust (Hosking 2014), how trust operates in society at large (Hardin 2006), and the relationship between food and trust (Kjærnes, Harvey, and Warde 2007). Trust can be seen to operate at different scales: one can “trust” a government institution or one can “trust” a local farmer. Here again scale –or perceived scale attached to how a particular foodstuff is marketed– plays a role in what “trust” means for particular consumers. For example, in their study of farmer’s markets in Ontario, Smithers, Lamarche and Joseph (2008), found that the language used by respondents indicated an absence of concern about the methods of farming employed by vendors. “(W)e sense here that it is not so much that shoppers are disinterested in farming practices, but rather that trust frequently trumps the need for the details!” (2008:345) One of their respondents even connected local-ness with trustworthiness, saying, “*I find them trustworthy because they are local*

people”(2008:345).

C. Clare Hinrichs (2000:297) questions the idea of trust altogether (as an aspect of social embeddedness), and considers it is too often treated as an almost “magical attribute of direct agricultural markets.” While alternative food initiatives may create possibilities for closer farmer/consumer social bonds, Hinrichs finds that such markets are “fundamentally rooted in commodity relations” (2000:295). It would be naïve to think that commodity relations are not embedded in the transactions that take place at Orchard Hill, but I argue that in this particular CSA trust generally plays a more fundamental role and –what is more important– *operates in a two-way direction*.

The clients I spoke with clearly trust Ken and Martha and their methods. For instance, not one of the people I spoke to had any concerns that Orchard Hill Farm was no longer officially organically certified. When I asked a long-time CSA member about this, she said:

I think Martha and Ken are the important part for us, whatever labels go with that. Whatever they are doing, I know that they are going to do it with integrity, so I guess because I trust them, I trust the food that comes from there and whatever the label is, is less important.

Ken felt that they operated a farm with a transparency that people could observe, on a scale that made that possible.

Our CSA is small enough and the people come here and see the farm and they know us. At least, they know us well enough that if they had questions they would ask us or the interns about our organic practice. We still follow the standards, it's just that we opted not to be certified.

In her study of provisioning activism in Italy, focusing on Solidarity Purchase

Groups (*Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale*, or *GAS*) anthropologist Christina Grassini (2014:89) writes:

In my ethnographic experience organic certification is perceived by both gasista consumers and producers as an intrusive form of mediation. Though sometimes necessary in lieu of other ways of ascertaining quality and transparency, direct transactions with trusted farmers whose crops can be inspected and whose crop quality has been ascertained by experience is preferred and rewarded.

Martha and Ken have proved their *trustworthiness* through personal relations. They have never advertised their CSA. This reputation for trustworthiness has spread by word of mouth even across county lines, sprouting from interactions with a small circle of original members who then disseminated their opinions. Here we see that direct, personal knowledge and relationships have a bearing on how trust functions in this setting as opposed to how it functions with larger scale institutions. For instance, consumers trust that certain health regulations and guidelines are operating in supermarket chains where impersonal relations dominate and where they purchase items, without relying on more personal knowledge.

But beyond this crucial fact that clients trusted Ken and Martha, I found that one of the things which keeps people returning season after season is that they, as clients, are also extended trust by Ken and Martha in multiple ways. This can be demonstrated by thinking about how exchanges happen on the farm on a day-to-day basis.

Arriving at the house as a CSA member, and depending on what is going on at the moment, one may or may not be greeted by another person. If he is around and is inclined to expend the energy to approach you, Caesar, the dog, might approach to investigate. Ken might nod from his workshop across from the pick-up room, where he is often

concentrating on a mechanical or metallurgical problem. Martha may be there and say “hello” as she passes in and out of sight with food for the chickens or something to be stored in the cooler. Most days there is someone around to answer questions and make sure bins are topped up as they get depleted, but that person is usually multi-tasking – working in the back on another job or cleaning bins, and generally keeping things organized; present, but not supervising or directing people in any way. Quite often I have driven in, collected my share, and driven out while everyone was either busy in the field or otherwise occupied in the house or an outbuilding. I have seen written on the chalkboard messages such as, “We are all busy in the field haying today. Knock on the house door if you need something.”

Besides attesting to the daily busy-ness of a working farm, many aspects of this set-up indicate an untroubled trust in the people who come and go on the farm. One is not greeted, for example, by surveillance cameras or suspect height measurement tapes, such as those found at a Farm Boy grocery store. The pick-up room itself has no door as such, but rather a sliding panel that remains open most of the year. The room, which is also used to store firewood during the deep winter months, is connected to the house by a passageway lined with an assortment of rubber boots, straw hats, horse bridles, rainwear, and heavy coats. The kitchen entrance –a heavy, windowless timber door with iron hardware– is not kept locked. The walk-in insulated cooling shed which stands outside the pick-up room is also not locked and is accessible for people who, for some reason or other, need their share put aside to be collected outside of regular pick-up hours. (Importantly, these people are also trusted to close the door properly on hot summer days.)

On any given pick-up day it is apparent that people are trusted to move around parts of the farm beyond the pick-up area. For example, a note on the pick-up room chalkboard might encourage members to stroll the path that winds through the woodlot to enjoy spring trilliums or fall colour, or perhaps it will invite them to view a new foal or calf in the field. In an observation linked to this sense of trust, one woman described her visits to the farm to me in this way: “I feel like...not that I own the farm, but I feel like I’m welcome there. If I want to go for a walk in the woods, it’s absolutely okay and I think they’re happy with that too, it’s not a problem for them”. Parents are encouraged to take children to see the chickens behind the house or the horses in their stalls, to feed waste such as ferny carrot tops to the pigs in the barn, and even allowed to use the bathroom when necessary. A bushel basket filled with an assortment of toy cars, tractors, and rubber balls sits openly just inside the pick-up room door, to the delight of toddlers and young children whom I often see playing in the gravel behind the pick-up room or on the lawn in front of the house. Some children enjoy taking possession of the hammock strung under the pine trees behind the house. This freedom of movement around the property extends to the fields themselves where clients are trusted with helping to manage the most important aspect of the operation, the valuable produce itself. For example, a handwritten chalkboard message one day announced to the members: “There are no pick-your-own raspberries today, so please don’t pick them! (This message was followed by a smiley face.)

Another sign of a system of trust can be observed in the 1.5 litre plastic ice cream tub that sits on a shelf in the pick-up room, re-purposed to hold cash and to make change for eggs, honey, or flour (items sold independently of the CSA share). This, of course, is

not unlike unattended roadside produce stands which can be found across the province, where motorists are trusted to leave the correct amount of cash and only take what they pay for without coming up the laneway to the farmhouse. While a seemingly insignificant detail, the public cash box system in fact seems to evoke a notion of a “country” trust that is seen to stand in opposition to “city” distrust.

The individual collection of the weekly share itself is based on a system of trust. In the pick-up room, there is a list on a clipboard hanging on a nail where you are meant to cross off your name so that Martha can see that you have collected your share that week. Other people are also welcomed to pick up your share for you, if you are away or unable to get to the farm for some reason. A 2 1/2' X 4' green chalkboard lists the day's offerings and the amounts people should take. A smaller square of chalkboard also accompanies each designated area for the week, identifying the vegetable and number for each share, or in some cases just labelled *EXTRAS – Help yourselves*. People bring their own bags or baskets and are trusted to take only their share. (Again, I will discuss problems with this system in a later section.) Items are not pre-counted or packed ahead of time, as is most often the case with box delivery or pick-up programs. There are a few exceptions: things such as podded peas, green beans or florets of broccoli and cauliflower may be gathered together in green plastic or cardboard quart baskets, but even these items are often offered in a bin with a container for measuring out your own quart.

In addition to the vegetables and herbs, there are other items available to Orchard Hill members that indicate a high level trust in how they will move through and behave on the farm. For example, several pairs of garden scissors hang from nails in the pick-up room so that people may take flowers from the cutting garden beside the house. Not only

are adults and children trusted to enter the straw-mulched garden rows and cut as many flowers as they want *with sharp tools*, they are trusted to return those tools. When there is a pick-your-own item in season, such as strawberries or raspberries, again there is no specified or suggested limit and people are often encouraged by email ahead of time to bring their own containers. Members make their own way down to the fields by car or on foot, and then they locate and gather the crops unsupervised, usually out of view of any farm worker, for lengthy periods of time.

Trust is also a part of the workshare experience. Members, sometimes accompanied by their children, are trusted to help in the fields –again often with sharp tools such as knives and secateurs or even pitchforks (used to loosen the soil before pulling up carrots, for instance.) They are trusted to handle the produce and, with the particular needs of the day explained, to make on-the-spot decisions about ripeness or size suitability as they harvest different items. While there are always certain jobs to be accomplished, people are also trusted to work at their own tempo and interested children are usually trusted with the same work as the adults. Everyone is trusted not to trample or damage plants unduly, to do counts when filling containers, and to work safely near the horses as the brimming bins are loaded onto the waiting wagon.

On pick-up days, there is no overseer to see what people leave the farm with, no Costco-style bags-and-receipt check at the exit. In general, people come and go at their own pace, without interference, perhaps spending as little time as possible or perhaps chatting with others, lingering in the garden, strolling with children, or admiring an animal. Sometimes I have heard basic advice given in a friendly manner when the people involved were new clients and may have been unfamiliar with safe farm behaviour: *Don't*

let your child go into the barns alone. Don't touch the electric fences. Beyond concern for people's well-being, however, there is a friendly but very hands-off feel to the way things operate, especially for long-time members who know their way around.

Not only does this open system contrast with a typical grocery store exchange, it contrasts with other farms where outsiders are not expected to be in the fields or barns and may even break animal health regulations by doing so. For example, during the 2014 outbreak of PEVd (porcine epidemic diarrhea virus) on London and Chatham, Ontario pig farms, containment protocols for people and materials entering the farms were required by the Canadian Swine Health Board (CSHB) (Meat and Poultry.com Jan. 2014). Ken has commented to me that he enjoys people coming onto the farm and knows that he wouldn't enjoy working on an industrial-scale animal farm with such restrictions. One apprentice who had already worked on eight different farms told me:

Ken and Martha do a wonderful thing by letting so many people come on the farm so often and especially giving them, like - they have so much grace, like, letting people harvest and, like, letting people prepare things. Like, when they first did that I was, like, holy shit I can't do this. Like, I would not...I'd be like "No, no, no, no, no, you're handling that too rough!" I've learned from Ken and Martha that because this is a more full circle process - if it's their vegetables they are handling, they kind of have more of an awareness. It's no like I'm just going to go wash this and sell it to anyone; you're a CSA member, you're here, you're taking part in this, washing vegetables that you're going to take home with you...

As I have pointed out, Ken has said that he likes that there are fewer visitors with the CSA than when they had the pick-your-own retail business. The reduced volume of customers coming to the farm (and the fact that these are now mostly repeat visitors) undoubtedly has a bearing on the level of trust Martha and Ken extend. And while they do have liability insurance, as Louise, an apprentice, put it, "Having people on the farm with horses is huge! I think they have to have a lot of trust in their customers..."

A seemingly unimportant yet instructive interchange with Martha underlined for me several other contrasts between the CSA and a grocery store model, including the notion of an implied trust in clients' judgment and expectations. During my research period, Martha had experimented with growing sweet potatoes (*Ipomoea batatas*) –large, sweet-tasting tubers in the *Convolvulaceae* or Morning Glory family, very distantly related to the potato. Perhaps not surprisingly, given Martha's experience with growing varied crops, the trial had proven a success. The picture featured on the blog in late September (<http://www.orchardhillfarm.ca/?p=1697>) shows a trail of well-formed tubers spilling out behind the four-horse team drawing the potato digger. Later, however, instead of being distributed with the rest of the CSA offering, I noticed the sweet potatoes had been put in a crate outside of the pick-up room with a sign indicating that people were welcome to help themselves. Despite their appearance, the tubers were delicious, the sign said, but people would just need to cut off the decayed sections before cooking. Martha happened to be there as I was gathering some into a bag and she explained to me that after harvesting they had been stored in one of the hoop houses to cure, since sweet potatoes need some heat to become sweet. However, the unexpectedly warm fall weather had caused the tubers to get "sunburned," as Martha described it. In fact, they were blackened and quite mushy in sections.

Later that evening, as I cut off rotting sections and peeled the leathery jackets over the sink, I realized that I would probably never have been offered such produce at a grocery store and, in truth, Martha was probably exposing herself to complaints from any overly health and safety concerned clients, or at least from people for whom the "Ew!" factor was too great. On workshare days I have seen her instruct people to discard any

very green potatoes they came across, so I trusted her to not offer anything harmful. (Greenness in a potato skin indicates exposure to sunlight and a resulting accumulation of the toxins solanine and chaconine which can cause hallucinations and convulsions in humans). Because these sweet potatoes were so large (some almost a foot long and 5 inches wide) I was able to salvage a good portion of each damaged root. After an hour in the oven with a mixture of chiles, cinnamon, cloves, oregano, orange, and honey, they were quickly consumed by my family along with the rest of the dinner. What may have been considered waste in other circumstances proved to be completely useful and delicious.

I must emphasize that this is the only time I recall any decaying produce being knowingly offered, even as an extra. Given the volume of produce that leaves the farm, it is understandable that the occasional soft potato or old leaf among the greens may turn up in a share but, usually, even the items in the “extras” bins are of excellent quality; they may end up there because they are misshapen or too small, but they may often just simply be extra (and perfectly good) harvest. (“If we don’t have it, people don’t get it. But if we have extra we share it.” Martha had explained to me.)

I believe that in offering imperfect produce such as these sweet potatoes Martha and Ken demonstrate a form of trust in the people they are growing for – trust that they understand that Grade “A” is not always the outcome, nor even necessary for satisfactory eating, but most of all a trust that people will not make business complaints based on the standards of a very different industrial food system.



Fig. 5 Larkspur (*Delphinium consolida*) in the cutting garden with apprentice bunkhouse in the background (Photograph by author)

The cutting garden epitomizes for me the open, trusting approach that I find to be the norm at this CSA. If work is indeed “love made visible” as Kahlil Gibran wrote (1923 [1948]), then perhaps nowhere on the farm is this better demonstrated than in the cutting garden, where exuberance spills onto straw-couched paths. Separated from the gravel drive by berry bushes and grapevine, the flower garden is an area which runs alongside the house and into the south lawn. Although Martha had told me that at first flowers were a bit of an afterthought to the CSA, it has clearly become a popular aspect for members, and something she takes pleasure in providing.

From early spring to late fall, this relatively small garden gives up an impressive array of blooms, colours, textures and scents. The rectangular, triple-row garden appears delightfully informal. In truth, much physical labour, planning and preparation have

preceded the flower gathering that members do here throughout the summer CSA season, from fall clean-up and soil preparation, to perusal of seed catalogues on dark winter evenings, to the propagation and nurturing of seedlings in early spring, weed suppression, and periodic watering.

With perennial peonies, irises, sedums, and native coneflowers forming a recurring portion of the garden, over the years a changing array of annuals has filled the rest of the space as Martha and apprentices have experimented with seed varieties. The plants I have encountered here make up an English cottage gardener's dream list:

Bells of Ireland
 Bleeding Hearts (*Dicentra*)
 Borage
 Carnation (*Dianthus*)
 Celosia
 Chamomile
 Coneflower
 Cornflowers
 Dahlia (*Dahlia*)
 Delphinium
 Foxglove (*Digitalis*)
 Lavender
 Lilies
 Love-in-a-mist (*Nigella*)
 Love-Lies-Bleeding (amaranth)
 Mallow (*Malva*)
 Marigold (*Tagetes*)
 Mexican marigold (*Calendula*)
 Mountain Bluets
 Nasturtium (*Nasturtium*)
 (*Nicotiana*)
 Peonies
 Roses
 Salvia
 Snapdragons
 Statice

(Sunflowers ranging from yellow to red to chocolate and bright mixes of Gladioli

are also grown down in the vegetable field and usually left in buckets of water in the pick-up room.)

When the flowers are sufficiently established (usually by mid-June), a simple note on the bottom of the weekly chalk-written pick-up list reminds people to help themselves to flowers in the garden beside the house. Several pairs of garden scissors hang on nails below the chalkboard for people to use. (One Saturday I discovered a pair of hand-forged scissors in our food basket after I had returned home. Although I returned them the next week, I wondered how often these items had to be replaced due to such absent-mindedness on the part of members.) Periodically, *“Please don’t cut the flowers in front of the house”* is scrawled on the board when someone mistakenly targets the lilies, sedums and dahlias near the front door but, generally, the offer is uncomplicated. *Here are some scissors. Please find some flowers you would like to take home with you. Enjoy!* No one looking over your shoulder (who would have had time, anyhow?), no counting or measuring. People are trusted not to trample the plants, nor fill their car boot with all of the flowers in bloom that day.

While there are never pre-picked bouquets or instructions about what to pick and how much, there *are* parents with toddlers in the garden, perhaps investigating a caterpillar or proudly gathering a handful of bright cornflowers. There are kids of different ages exploring the rows, much like my sons once did, fascinated by a butterfly attracted to the garden, pressing open the mouths of snapdragons or excitedly trying to get a toad in hand. There are scents and textures to experience, such as the sharp smell of *Tagetes*, the surprisingly prickly Bells of Ireland, and the velvety rope-blooms of Love-lies-bleeding. There are the brilliant red and orange nasturtiums blooms, hiding like

jewels beneath their round, mounding leaves, and drought-loving zinnias in an array of flashy colours. There are bees visiting flowers and intricate spider webs stretching between stems. Sometimes there will be no one else around and you may find yourself alone amongst the blooms. It is a place where I have often lingered on days when I came to pick up the weekly vegetables on my own, taking my time to search out just the right combination of blooms, buds and foliage, enjoying the sun or the breeze or the just the break from work at home. Sometimes there will be others chatting as they gather stems, some offering answers to questions about names of flowers or perhaps pointing out a brightly painted spider.

The cutting garden is an aspect of Orchard Hill that immediately takes us beyond a merely transactional experience. The flowers are offered in a generous gesture that reaches beyond the purchase of harvest shares. There is a spirit of *mi casa es su casa* here, or at least *mi jardín es su jardín* --my garden is your garden. We are invited to partake of the pleasures of this garden, to experience it as our own space, and even to harvest its treasures as we see fit.

Conclusions

“Even leaving the organic aside if you look at the kinds of things that Ken and Martha are doing - if you looked at a tomato from the grocery store, now would it have the same nutrient value as one from Martha and Ken’s? I don’t think it would - I mean it wouldn’t taste as good, but the taste is just part of the story”.

—Helen, Orchard Hill Farm CSA member

The cutting garden tour above brings together some of the threads I have been

exploring throughout this chapter. What I am calling “re-enchantment” expresses a desire for a “meaningful” life; in this case, a closer connection to food, farm, and farmer.

Although the garden does not produce food (even if some of the flowers from the garden are edible), it is a particularly ‘enchanted’ place on the farm. In part, this is because the garden is something that began as an “extra,” a gift that Martha generously extended to those who came to the farm, but also because the garden is an extension of the house, an intimate and personal space that embodies the closeness that is possible for those seeking such an experience in transactions on this farm. Members’ encounters with the farm (including my own) are more than mere contractual transactions: “going to the farm” is bound up with things that appeal to the senses and emphasize this closeness—to the land, the food, or the people who produce it and others who consume it. The importance of each of these elements varies with each member: for some, all three issues are important, for others only the food brings them to Orchard Hill. For most members of this CSA closeness, (whether of geography [in the idea of the local], relations [in a sense of community, reciprocal trust or, at the least, “putting a face on the farmer”], or in “knowing” the food [through the intimate act of eating fresh, organic food]) adds value to the food produced at Orchard Hill Farm. Food, farmer, and farm are in one sense material; in another sense they are symbolic: they embody meanings, desires, interests, memories, and beliefs that members bring to the farm. This symbolic dimension revolves around food but it is in this dimension where what I have been calling “re-enchantment” takes place. It is precisely the small scale of production and the possibilities for closeness (in various senses) that make it possible to construe Orchard Hill Farm as an ideal model that seems to represent everything that large-scale industrial food systems do not.

Members at Orchard Hill find re-enchantment in what they perceive as meaningful, small-scale encounters with farmer, food, and landscape. From the farmer's perspective, questions of scale are also involved in the production of food here, ranging from attention to microbial activity in the soil to global concerns about carbon emissions and declining soil health. And as we shall see in the next section, the farmers and apprentices themselves pursue and find a "re-enchantment" of living through food and its production.

Chapter 4

Working With

Chapter 4 explores the facet of Orchard Hill Farm that I believe truly sets it apart from conventionally-farmed, larger scale operations; the fact that Ken and Martha and their apprentices “*work with*” on many levels, from the soil on their farm, to their horses, to their wider community. The first section discusses the idea of the “post-pastoral ethos” (Paxson 2013) which I saw in action there, in opposition to industrial scale agriculture. The second section discusses the efforts made to create and work with a living “soil habitat” as a medium for growing quality food on this farm. The third section turns to the crucial role of the horses in the day to day operation of the farm and responsive relationship involved in working with them. The final section describes the structure of a “typical” day during the growing season, illustrating how this CSA is also about working with people in supportive relationships. This chapter also considers how, for farmers, an embodied experience of farming in this post-pastoral manner results in their own “enchantment”.

4.1 Production with a difference: Seeing the whole picture

In “*Consumed*” (2013:45-46) author Sarah Elton writes that neither a purely organic nor a purely biotech approach will feed the world, but rather a combination of approaches that produce a new food system focused on sustainability –one that works to eliminate the adverse effects of industrial agriculture and also expands organic production in areas where it can compete with conventional crop cultivation (2013:46). “[T]he challenge of the future is so severe,” writes Elton, “that we must assiduously use all the tools at our disposal to create a food system that can feed us all without destroying the ability of future generations to feed themselves” (2013:46). She also notes that lessening the environmental consequences of global food production will require transforming not only farming but also “how we think about food, how we sell it, and how we are involved in producing it” (47).

At Orchard Hill, people are taking up this challenge on a daily basis. People here are anticipating changes that will be necessary in the future but are working in the present to demonstrate how food can be grown without fossil fuels, herbicides and pesticides, and how this can be a viable business alternative for small-scale farmers –not just an exceptional experiment. How they go about this is the most important feature that makes this project stand out from others; in my observation, Ken and Martha make a conscientious and self-conscious choice to work *with* “nature” rather than approach “nature” as something that needs to be managed, and controlled in its totality. They recognize that producing food on their land in a successful and sustainable manner involves a complex, interleaved process: from the nurturing of soil bacteria, to

relationships among and with animals that contribute labour and food, to interactions with global apprentices and local CSA members. Horses, chickens, pigs, farmers, interns, fungi, insects, bacteria, and microbes: all are important living beings and actors on which the farm, as *process*, depends. Some of the processes and interconnections are more readily visible than others, but multiple components –and not only draught horses– are harnessed together towards a determined end: a sustainable source of food for consumers and a viable, and ecologically sound subsistence for farmers.

One blog entry by Martha (July 17, 2014) shows a snapshot in time of multiple processes in motion at once and the satisfaction she experiences as things come together.

The apprentice team has been working hard getting the gardens into tiptop shape. We have the tomatoes trellised, beds weeded and a beautiful crop of cabbages. Our last planting of fall broccoli and cabbage were seeded in the greenhouse on Monday. The fall carrots, beets spinach and rutabaga have been direct seeded in the garden. The lettuce this season has been particularly good. Many of our CSA members have commented how much they are enjoying it. We wonder if it is the biological sprays we added to the soil or the cover crops, compost and soil amendments. Likely it is a combination, but it is gratifying to know that all Ken's care and study of soil fertility is paying off.

Ken may take to heart the Friends' belief that actions speak louder than words, but he also has plenty to say about what he calls “dysfunctional” conventional agriculture and the need for farmers across the globe to modify agricultural practices.

All you have to do is drive through Elgin County and see all the corn and soy beans we grow. If we had to feed the people in the county with that land, we'd have no problem - we'd have food to export, too. But it means a big change in the whole food system. And the whole change in the energy system in the world is going to force a big change in agriculture. Some farmers will just say, “Well, we'll just burn bio-diesel instead of petrol diesel” but then it's going to take 25% of their land to run their tractors and tractors may get very expensive...

Guided by profit margins, determined by global markets, the current industrial

food system (including the farmers who supply it) responds to the fluctuation of demand and prices. So, increasingly large farms in the U.S. and Canada are producing large quantities of corn, or soy, or whatever crop is profitable, and in much more limited varieties than was historically the case. Agricultural inputs, such as the intensive use of pesticides and fertilizers to achieve high and consistent yields, have become normalized even though they have been shown to be detrimental to soil health and/or the environment.



Fig. 6 Orchard Hill hen house with neighbour's field of corn in background

Food sovereignty, according to Wittman, Desmarais, and Wiebe (2010:5) occurs when “sustainable food production and genuine food security are a function of community-based control over the food system”. For Ken, changes to current food structures are inevitable. He predicts these changes will be tied to fuel availability but – more positively– also to the development of community-based food systems. He told me,

There should probably be a whole ring of CSAs around a city like London, even St. Thomas, but probably that won't happen until there is a big energy crisis and we can't access food from all over the world. When people are forced to buy locally, small local farms will have much greater stature.

Small local farms other than Orchard Hill which engage in sustainable and holistic farming methods are already successful in the Elgin County. Many of these rely on notions of “rural traditions” in marketing their products. For instance, HOPE Eco-farms, a co-operative of Amish farmers in nearby Aylmer, Ontario, uses this anagram on their packaging: “*Healthy. Old-fashioned. Pastoral. Eco-friendly.*” Their sales include “Pasture Raised Heritage Pork”, “Organic Heirloom Grains”, and “Artisan Dairy” products. However, despite advertising rhetoric, this holistic approach is not a “throwback” to the past. Like these farmers, Martha and Ken draw on and improve on past practices by recognizing the value in working *with* soil, animals, and their community. But this “working with” is not an attempt on Ken and Martha’s part to return to some imagined “golden age” of agriculture. “We’re not a farm out of the past, really, we’re a farm of the future and a model of sustainability –certainly more than conventional farms,” Ken told me.

In her book about artisanal cheese-makers in the northeastern United States Heather Paxson writes about just such a vision:

*(It) tells not of an ambivalent “complex pastoralism”, nor of a radical anti-pastoralism, so much as an optimistic **post-pastoralism**. (Emphasis in text.) Their ideological anchor is a revised pastoral that critiques industrial capitalism’s wholesale exploitation of nature and culture yet retains, while modifying, an opposition between city and country –and it hopes to offer a better way forward (2013:17).*

Rather than employing romantic notions, at Orchard Hill Farm there is, to use Paxson’s term, a “post-pastoral” vision of farming. Here, Paxson’s understanding of the

artisanal cheesemakers' approach is also relevant:

While valuing, even sometimes romanticizing the potentiality of nature, they are under no illusion that that nature is simply there, awaiting labour to be mixed with it. Instead, they understand that nature's generative potential must be realized through proper care—that is, through post-pastoral artisanship (2013:17-18).

As an apprentice hoping to farm herself in the future, Marla felt that Orchard Hill Farm was a model for a rational, sustainable, and financially viable small farm. She told me,

They are unique but they are also very successful in what they do. And also they are very thoughtful people and thoughtful in their field management. So I guess what it all boils down to for me is—I would want more people to know about this place and all the work that goes into producing such quality food in this kind of loving environment, open environment, that obviously is drawing people back year after year. That's what I would want more people to see. Not just the transparency that Ken and Martha have, but their science behind it all—'cause there is a lot of science.

For Paxson, “(c)heese itself exemplifies *cultured nature*, the product of human skill working in concert with the natural agencies of bacteria, yeasts, and molds to transform a fluid made by ruminant animals” (2013:18). After nineteen years as a “certified organic” farm, Ken and Martha had made a choice not renew their certification, but to continue applying organic techniques. They and the apprentices I interviewed also understand that their work involves give and take, variability, and an everyday balancing that is part of a larger holistic process. This CSA works as an integrated whole involving human and non-human actors and Martha, Ken, the apprentices, and work-share members consciously or tacitly understand the work as a collaborative endeavour. The CSA business model itself is a conscious choice to *work with* community but Orchard Hill Farm goes beyond this in striving for a collective “*with*” that involves (among many

other things) “characters” in the soil and caring for and working with animals as “co-beings”. Often, this approach contrasts with the regimented timetables and practices of industrial production.

Maria, the CSA member who had talked to me about what a good life the animals at the farm had (see Ch. 2, pg 71), told me she had brought her cousin, a conventional pig farmer, to the farm one day.

He walked along with one of the CSA workers and he was telling him how he had to work with the horses. Matthew asked, “What would happen if something had to be done or harvested and the horses were tired?” And [the worker] said, “Well, we do have the tractors as back-up but maybe we would just let it go another day...” And that whole idea...that you don’t have to do things in this instant...I think, for me it’s the whole culture of the farm –that you do things in a way that seems reasonable and moderate. And I think that also exemplifies the Quaker lifestyle that’s sort of moderate, it’s not forcing anything on anyone...

Working with plants, insects, the animals, or the land itself is such an important aspect of the farm, it took precedence over the need for short-term productivity, as shown in this discussion with Jack about crop rotations.

So, we’re not following our winter wheat with corn immediately afterwards and then soybeans the next year - it’s not that intensive of a rotation. You’ve gotta give the land a break sometimes - you know, tillage is hard on soil. Like, that’s one thing –you’re always harrowing and ploughing and prepping ground– and it’s really hard on soil and it’s hard on things that live in the soil so you need to give the land a break sometimes in order to rebuild itself. And the value is there in terms of value in return. It happens, it just takes a little more time. Like, your yields will be consistent over time. They won’t diminish. You just gotta give the land a break sometimes, take it out of production, as it were. But that’s part of the way we do it.

This mode of thinking and working requires a different view of the human role in nature than that employed in the industrial food system where farmers are pushed to achieve laboratory consistency in a timely fashion. As we have seen in Chapter 1, many Ontario farmers may no longer own the land they are farming, but instead are leasing or

renting what was once their plot from agricultural corporations which directly control their planting cycles and limit their methods for dealing with potential problems.

By contrast, farming at Orchard Hill involves working with “nature” below and above the surface of the soil to both anticipate and devise flexible responses to farming challenges. The following blog post written by Martha (August 10, 2015) serves to demonstrate:

The season is marching on and we are ready to start harvesting our fall bearing raspberries. Each year seems to bring something new for us to deal with. Last year we saw the arrival of Spotted Wing Drosophila in our raspberries. It is a tiny fruit fly originating in Southeast Asia. It arrived on the west coast about 6-7 years ago and gradually made its way across the continent. It lays an egg in the fruit before it is ripe and ruins the infected fruit. We pruned the raspberries to open up the canes to allow for more air movement. Apparently, the spotted wing drosophila prefers a dark damp environment. It also opens it up for the natural predators to see the spotted wing drosophila. It is frustrating for us and challenging! We will have to wait and see if all our pruning efforts make a difference.

That year, while there were fruit flies on some of the raspberries, the fruits were still edible. Clients received an explanation via email and the pick-up room chalkboard, and it was left up to them if they chose to gather raspberries. The following year Ken and Martha did not encounter the same problem. Rather than spraying pesticides, they worked with “air movement”, natural predators, and the habits of the problem insect itself. The blog post continued:

Last year we also had swede midge in our brassicas for the first time. It is a tiny fly that lays its eggs in the growing point of broccoli, cabbage, rutabaga turnip and ruins the crops. It also comes from Asia and was first found in Ontario in 2000. As organic farmers the only control is to cover everything with row cover to physically exclude them. We have invested in large sheets of row cover this year and have succeeded in producing some beautiful broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower. It is a lot of extra expense and labour to cover and uncover the crops for cultivation and harvest, but it is satisfying to win the battle with a new insect and to be able to continue to produce organically grown brassicas for our CSA customers.



Fig. 7 *Rows of cabbages at Orchard Hill*

While expenditure of time and money was necessary, again pesticides –which are known to do more than kill the intended pests– were avoided, this time through the judicious use of water permeable fabric. It was held down against the wind by wood from the farm’s wood pile and, though some extra effort was required to manage the crop, the result was worth the investment for Martha.

Another way that they work with “nature” here, is in how they have learned to reduce the disturbance and uncovering of fields across seasons through no-till planting, a method in which crops are planted directly into decomposing ground cover without

ploughing the soil. After I watched him with a team in a field of buckwheat one afternoon, Ken paused in the lane and explained to me the difference between conventional and organic no-till methods. Cover crops are quick-growing “green manure” plantings (such as red clover or buckwheat) that are used to control field erosion and enrich the soil. While conventional farmers spray herbicides to kill a cover crop, organic farmers have developed a roller-crimper to crush the stems of the plants and stop the growing process. In organic farming, the plant material is left on the surface and micro-organisms break down the organic matter, enriching the soil below. This method also reduces water evaporation around the new crop. In an entry on the farm blog, (September 7, 2015) Martha describes the preparation Ken was doing that afternoon on the following year’s squash field.

The no-till planter was used to plant another cover crop of rye and Austrian peas into the crimped buckwheat. Next spring when the rye begins to shed pollen we will crimp the field again and transplant the small squash plants directly into the rye/pea mulch. The peas will help to fill in the gaps and allow for good ground cover for the squash vines to grow over. We may put down a strip of green mulch right around the plants to add some extra mulch and heat. As the green matter breaks down it heats up. The added heat under the row cover gives them a jump start. We cover the squash with row cover to protect them from being eaten by cucumber beetle.

In this example, multiple processes improve the area for growing without disturbing the crucial deep root zone (which I will be discussing further): the soil was not left bare and thus susceptible to winter erosion, it was enriched by the nitrogen-carrying legume roots, ground cover kept down weeds and helped to retain moisture, and green mulch provided heat for tender plants. Once again, lightweight row cover was utilized as a defence against airborne insects, as well as a heat retainer.

Ken studied agriculture at the University of Guelph during the late 70s at a time

when he says there were “no courses and little information available” on organic farming methods. Now he keeps up-to-date on publications and current discussions about new methods in organic agriculture. His interest in the potential of cover cropping and no-till methods has led him to experiment with different types of green covers in preparing the areas designated for the CSA garden. For example, in the mid-summer of 2015, a mature cover crop of peas, oats, and barley was knocked down with the crimper-roller. Directly into this green mulch, they planted a mixed cover crop of soybeans, millet, sun hemp, and sunflower seeds. Later, the field would be divided up into different areas, depending on what was to grow there the next year and another round of cover crops would be planted before the final garden crop was introduced.

In its open-ness to “working with” natural processes of growth and decomposition, this type of small-scale field and crop management contrasts with *top-down* management increasingly exemplified by “big Ag” –management that “works against” nature, approaching a field as an empty slate to be manipulated chemically, generally disregarding specificities of place and long-term sustainability in favour of market-driven production imperatives. In Canada, this has resulted in what the National Farmer’s Union (of which Ken and Martha are members) calls a “ ‘one size fits all’ export-driven, low-priced commodity production model” (Slomp 2016). Like Ken, Jack the apprentice saw this as approach as “damaging”. Sitting in front of the house one evening while farm machinery was still operating in the neighbour’s field, he said,

As you can see across the road from here and all over Elgin County and Southwestern Ontario, there’s a lot agriculture that, from a view, it looks like it’s pretty hard on the land. That’s some big machinery that they’re rollin’ across there. I just gotta wonder how good that really is for soil. And of course there’s a lotta chemicals going to producing that food and they’re certainly not coy about it – like, they still crop dust from the air and use very large boom sprayers to do

their work, so it's not like they're trying to hide the fact that there's a real chemical dependency happening there...which is, you know, you see chemical dependency in other aspects of society and it's probably every bit as damaging in an agricultural sense as it is in a social sense.

Marla, the apprentice from central New York State who had studied agro-ecology, also described to me her exasperation with conventional American farms and industrial-scale organic farming, based on her internship experiences and tours of farms in several states.

(The) food system is extremely fucked up, to be honest. And when I'm here, it's nice we're not spraying all this crap. We're thinking about years to come and we're thinking about the years that have already happened and Ken and Martha, they are just super thoughtful about all that, and they have records and they are willing to share it all with you.

She compared Orchard Hill to some of the conventional farms she had visited, saying,

You're thinking in a different more whole system approach. I guess it's a different approach and it's nicer—it tends to be a longer thought process. It tends to be thinking for the future a bit more than your conventional or industrial.

Jack spoke with wonder about how productive Orchard Hill had become under the kind of “thoughtful” management that Marla had talked of.

The one thing that really blew me away this year was how much you can produce on a very small piece of land and, you know, we've had people come and take a look at the farm—I've shown different people around—and they look at what's goin' on here and what amazes them is how much land is, quote, 'out of production'—meaning there's not a crop growin' on it at that time. Then you have to explain to them “Well, we're growin'—we're makin' hay for the horses or the cows, and grain, as well, for the horses...But, it's like anything. Like, if you take care of the land, it'll take care of you in return but if you abuse it for any length of time it'll stop taking care of you.

Jack also spoke about how he felt that the reductionist approach within the industrial food system was causing problems.

A lot of the corn and soybeans that they're growing goes to animal feed and of course corn and it's byproducts are in so many things that you can buy today, like processed food...and now, of course, corn is being used as fuel in the form of ethanol while people are hungry. And, of course, it's driving prices through the roof and now it's creating food shortages elsewhere. It's a bit -I don't know if it's irony or paradox that this (holding up an ear of dried corn that had been left out for the birds) –a clean-burning, green fuel– is creating huge problems elsewhere 'cause so often things are not seen as being part of a greater whole. It's sort of seen as these isolated things that you could treat independently of everything else. But it's not like that. Like, the corn that you're takin' to make into fuel or some sort of cellulose plastic product or whatever, is food that you are takin' from somebody or something's mouth. So, these things don't exist in a vacuum but people treat it that way and it ends up creating a lot of problems...

When “working with” in a post-pastoral approach, the farmer, by taking into consideration how all elements and actors fit together, both encourages and “lets” beneficial relationships flourish –from people, animals, and plants, down to the scale of the microbial level of the soil.

4.2 The Good Soil

At Orchard Hill, healthy soil (ploughed, amended, planted in, left to rest, studied, and *valued*) is at the foundation of the entire operation. Just as Ken and Martha's house has been built on a good foundation, the farm is constructed on good soil; this is an important, yet, for many, *invisible*, reason for why Orchard Hill has flourished. The diverse community of “characters” in the soil, as I have heard Ken refer to them, is what/who he is talking about when he tells young farmers and anyone else who is interested, “Let's work *with* them.” So strongly does Ken feel about this issue that in a directive written for the Ecological Farmers of Canada, Ken included the recommendation that educational programmes from the elementary level through to

university “must instill a respect for all of creation but especially the soil” (Laing, *Transformation Strategy for Agriculture*). Although this view is tied to his convictions as a member of the Society of Friends, Ken’s view of the soil as a living entity is also deeply informed by scientific research –with which he is well acquainted– and by years of practical experience in the fields.

It is important here to differentiate *dirt* from *soil*. Dirt is usually considered to be essentially dead, lacking the living microorganisms and decaying organic matter that make up soil. Furthermore, dirt is often thought of as soil displaced from an environment in which natural processes build healthy soil (Benson 2015:46); thus, *dirt* is soil that is incapable of sustaining the basic needs of any human community, as David R. Montgomery notes in his book *dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations* (2015).

In contrast to dirt, soil is a blend of three basic components: sand, silt, and clay. Sand, the largest particle, is irregular and quick-draining, and sand grains tend not to bind to each other (picture yourself trying to clump together a handful of sand). Silt particles are smaller, but they are also irregular. Clay particles are flat, almost microscopic, and stick to each other. As a whole, clay is usually rich in nutrients but is mostly anaerobic (oxygen-free) and does not allow the passage of water (Benson 2015:48). These three elements –sand, silt, and clay– come together naturally to form *aggregates*, which are clumps of particles that break apart easily. Aggregates are critical for the maintenance of healthy soil because they create both a space that allows air and water to move easily, and a barrier that prevents this same air and water from moving too quickly and destroying the soil’s structure. For these reasons, gardeners and farmers strive to build a combination of these three particles into what is known as ‘sandy loam’, a soil that is rich in nutrients

but well-draining and loose enough for optimum root growth.

Although these mineral particles make up most of the solids, air and water constitute about half of the space in good soil. Organic matter (including funghi, bacteria, living and non-living plants and animals) is also crucial to healthy soil, and usually makes up no more than 5% of soil (Benson 2015:48). Part of this organic matter is made up of *humus*, which is what remains after soil-dwelling organisms have digested once-living material. Humus is a stable form of decomposed organic matter that, among other things, also plays an important role in binding the elements of soil into aggregates (Benson 2015:48). Chemically treated soils that have little organic matter gradually lose structure, increasing the need for fertilization, cultivation, and irrigation (1992:13 Martin and Gershuny, eds).

Improving soil with organic matter, especially in composted form, is the basis of organic growing. Healthy and productive plants are supported by a diverse community of micro-organisms and other soil-dwelling life which eat, digest, and transform organic material into desirable humus.

Ken frequently gives talks on the subject to various types of audiences. He told me that he had written a soils course for the Ecological Farmers of Ontario with the purpose of educating people about soil processes, nutrient balance, and using soil amendments in the organic context. Besides ploughing workshops, Ken also gives compost workshops for farmers. I had heard him speaking of soil and farming methods on various occasions –to apprentices during workshare activities, to visiting CRAFT workshop participants as they stood around him in a field, and to members taking informal wagon tours of the farm on potluck gathering days. One evening in 2016, I

travelled to the Civic Garden Complex in London, Ontario to hear him speak to an audience of (mostly retirement-aged) Nature London members, a field naturalists' group founded in 1864 which, in its current form, strives to promote environmental awareness and protect natural areas in London.

Ken began his talk that evening with a bold statement about two major problems the world is facing – two problems with one solution, he claimed. The urgent issues of declining soil health and climate change could both be addressed by modifying agricultural practices across the globe. Farmers, he said, need to better understand the carbon cycle. In order to increase the locking up of carbon in soil, farmers must promote green cover of fields for as long as possible in the growing cycle. This, he said, could increase 5 to 10 times the amount of CO² locked into soil per hectare annually.

As he spoke, he clicked through various slides which served to underline his main points:

- 1) There is 3 times the amount of Carbon (C) found in soil compared to that found in forests.
- 2) Organic matter actually makes up a small portion of soil (only 5%) and, in reality, farmers struggle to achieve even a 2% level of organic matter.
- 3) Disturbed soil loses carbon (through decaying organic matter) and as it oxidizes, this increases atmospheric CO².

Ken admits that it is not only conventional agriculture that has problems; organic farming systems have their own limitations, he says, including soil degradation and declining levels of nutrients in produce. He recognizes that it is a huge challenge to change farming practices but insists it is “in the realm of possibility” not only to mitigate carbon losses but to absorb CO², mainly through modifying tillage habits. Just 6 inches of soil has the potential to absorb 2 million pounds of CO² per acre, he states. He invites the

audience to consider that, in Ontario alone, 10.6 million acres of land are currently in use for crops (2015) and thus, by cutting down on the disturbance of the soil as much as possible, huge change is within reach.

“A healthy root system equals healthy soil!” Ken’s slide announces enthusiastically. Ken describes a “soil food web” and the many levels that contribute to functioning, healthy soil that is suitable for growing nutritious food. The “characters” he says we must work with are on a scale of increasing size, from the microscopic to the visible, with the smallest among them being the most populous in a sample of soil. These range from: Bacteria and Actinomycetes, Protozoa, Nematodes, Mites, Springtails, Rotifers and Tardigrades, Insects, Myriapods, Spiders, Diplurans, Potworms and Earthworms, Snails and Slugs, to Vertebrates such as birds.

Ken’s talk that evening emphasized that, beyond any single productive and profitable season, farmers (and even home gardeners) must focus on the steps necessary to create long-term soil health, and a “soil habitat”. In simple terms, this means encouraging good aggregation of soil particles. This can be achieved by promoting the growth of something called “hyphae”, microscopic fungi which reach out beyond the nutrient-depleted zones around visible roots and root hairs. Fungal hyphae bind soil particles together into water-stable aggregates by producing something called glomalin that “glues” the particles together.

As noted above, good aggregation is essential for healthy soil; it provides aeration for root growth and microbes, and it allows for good drainage while still holding the maximum amount of water for plant growth. Importantly, aggregate provides habitat for microbes and space for roots and more mycorrhizal hyphae to grow while accessing

water and nutrients. To promote aggregation, Ken teaches that fields and other growing areas need to have “continuous living plants as much as possible.” It is these living plants that also transfer or “fix” carbon to the soil via the mycorrhizal fungi. On the other hand, tillage, bare soil, and high levels of nitrogen and phosphorous –all hallmarks of conventional farming– destroy aggregate by inhibiting the mycorrhizal fungi.

I had other opportunities to hear Ken’s views on farming and soil health. On a cool, drizzling spring day, I attended a “CRAFT Day” at Orchard Hill farm, where farmers and their apprentices from across the region gathered to socialize and learn about ecological farming. The farmers in the organization take turns hosting these events several times between March and October. They usually involve some teaching, discussion, demonstrations, a potluck lunch, and help with a job that needs doing. The forty or so apprentices at the Orchard Hill CRAFT day were mostly college age but included some older participants, including a semi-retired widow from Chile who was learning about organic methods in hopes of beginning her own farm when she returned to South America. That day, Ken directed an activity that involved splitting into groups, dispersing to various places on the farm, digging a cubic foot soil sample and counting the earthworms. While it came as no surprise to Ken, it was surprising to some participants that of the samples taken (in the chicken pasture, a horse pasture, a forested area, a hay field, the CSA garden area, and the rhubarb patch), the undisturbed chicken run appeared to be the most populated with living creatures, an indicator of healthy soil and deep root systems. The regularly cultivated areas contained the fewest earthworms, underlining for participants the idea that no-till methods, combined with cover cropping, could help to create living “soil habitats” for growing healthy plants.

4.3 Species Flourishing: The Case of Horses

If, because of scalar differences, working with soil can seem somewhat abstract, working with horses is an experiential, fully embodied experience that makes clear the give and take necessary to achieve the CSA's end product: the shares collected by members on pick up days. While chickens produce eggs and "composting" pigs help with the task of aerating straw/manure mixture for compost (and both efficiently consume vegetable waste), the draft horses are at the centre of much of what happens at Orchard Hill. Here, I will discuss why horses are such vital actors within the whole assemblage that is Orchard Hill. Exploring how horses are seen, talked about, and interacted with provides insights into their multiple positions as co-worker, co-being, and nostalgic rural cultural icon.

One late summer afternoon in 2014, my workshare tasks included gathering potatoes into bushel baskets with Martha, another member, and two apprentices. As usual, the slight breeze down in the field made the air feel more comfortable than the sticky humidity of town that day. Martha was excited to be taking advantage of one of Ken's recent inventions, a horse-drawn root lifter that is pulled along beneath root crops. This U-shaped bar very effectively loosens the soil and makes the job of hand-harvesting much lighter work, in this case exposing the previously hidden cache of tubers as the leafed tops were upended. It was still get-down-on-your-knees-and-sift-through-dirt-work, but it was unhurried and somehow immensely satisfying to fill up the bright plastic buckets with the various sized potatoes (and, inevitably, the odd rock which can sometimes look exactly like a soil-caked tuber). As I paused in the field to take a photo of the scene that day, Ken passed by with a team of four hauling the implement down an

adjacent row of foot-and-a-half high potato plants. It was at this moment that I first began to fully appreciate the term ‘horsepower’ and just what that was capable of accomplishing. Up until then, even after years of visiting the farm, I had mentally placed the horses in the background, acknowledging them as part of the farm functioning, beautiful, and fascinating, but still as objects in a certain way. On this day, as I lowered my camera and watched them pass, the sound –or rather the lack of it– was the thing which struck me the most. As the wake of disturbed plants and soil erupted behind the horses and the straw-hatted figure guiding them, there was only a soft and steady rumble accompanied by an easy slap and clatter of harness and metal, and the surprisingly light-sounding fall of sixteen hooves on the ground. I had trouble reconciling the resultant upheaval of earth with the unhurried, concentrated walking of the team.



Fig. 8 Martha, CSA member, and Ken with team of Suffolk Punch Horses using a root lifter to unearth potatoes (Photograph by author)

At the entrance to the farm there is a green sign that reads: *Orchard Hill Farm - Organic - CSA Garden - Suffolk Punch Horses*. A black and white sketch of a draft horse is featured on a black oval background between the words *Orchard Hill* and *Farm*. It is a direct and public acknowledgement that horses are at the very core of Orchard Hill's operation. The Orchard Hill website states that "*Ken's love of the Suffolk Punch breed has led him to use the Suffolk Punch draft horse as the main source of power on this draft horse powered farm.*" To augment this horse-powered approach, Ken has also adapted or built custom devices to fulfill particular purposes (for example, his innovative horse-drawn hay cutter and a horse-drawn transplanter).

Ken sometimes refers to the horses as "modular power units" or "solar tractors". As horse farmers, he and Martha claim that they have advantages over conventional farmers; not only is horse manure highly valuable in improving farm fertility, horses reproduce, so they are not only an expense – they are also revenue generators. "*Horses produce baby tractors to replace momma tractors and extras to sell.*", reads a slide in one of Ken's presentations about soil health. There are other benefits to farming with horses as opposed to tractors, as Susanna Forrest outlines in *The Age of The Horse* (2016). A diesel tractor can certainly farm a larger area than a horse (and more quickly) but "at a farm of around 70 acres, or when a greater field of values comes into play, the tractor begins to grind its gears and falter" (Forrest 2016:199). Horses' hooves, as large as they may be, contribute much less to soil erosion, compaction, and damage to vegetation than a tractor. Reproduction of horses does not require all that goes into the manufacturing of tractors –from iron ore to silicon chips, nor are skilled mechanics required for ongoing

maintenance. Another bonus; mares are also usually able to work until the last stages of pregnancy. Further, Forrest states:

A horse powered with hay and oats grown on its own farm, fertilized with the horse's dung and harvested using its own energy, is unaffected by an oil price rise or crisis. It produces a third of the methane of a cow, and its 9 tons of annual solid emissions make excellent fertilizer, sparing the need for natural gas or mined phosphate rock or potash (2016:199).

Living with horses, of course, means that there are no holidays without having people on farm to care for them. There is no off season for the farmer who chooses to work with horses. The horse will not be parked in the drive shed like the tractor or combine. When I noted the various farm implements in the drive shed, Jack had explained,

This is a modern farm that kind of runs on a variety of power sources, but we do have a tractor. And we do have people that are sometimes surprised to see it in action, but there are some jobs that horses just aren't suited for, and so we do use a tractor for those.

Horses, however, undertake many of Orchard Hill's essential tasks, such as discing and ploughing fields, planting seedlings, crimping and rolling cover crops, helping harvest edible crops (such as the potatoes, above), moving lumber, and transporting harvested crops from the field to the distribution centre adjacent to the main house. Some tasks undertaken on the farm, such as logging for building and heating needs, are far better suited to horses than to tractors, as far as maneuverability is concerned. One afternoon, I saw the horses hauling a load of ash wood, harvested from the woodlot, that would be used –perhaps with some poetic kind of justice– to construct a new horse stall. In recent years, horses have also been trained to grind the farm's grains using a treadmill

rigged for two draft horses to walk on at once. A small, black, second-hand Mennonite buggy sits in the drive shed, but because of an incident during which passing firetrucks spooked her horse, Martha told me they no longer use the horses to go to town. One exception to this was when Ken, his daughter, and granddaughter drove a covered wagon in the parade that was a part of the Sparta Settlement bicentennial celebrations in 2013.

Experienced horses are used to guide and lead new horses, thus helping to maintain and renew the cycle of living power that drives the farm. The horses also work with off-farm participants in ploughing workshops, contributing to the training of new teamsters and the passing on of very specialized agricultural teamster skills.

Yet horses are not passive “machines,” the mere conveyors of brute force, or reproducers of “baby tractors”. They are living creatures in their own right, with their own histories, and their own lines entangled in what Tim Ingold has called a “meshwork” that intertwines humans and non-human animals (2011).

Many members may not observe –as I had not, initially– or pay attention to the lives and work of the horses, beyond seeing them in the paddock by the house, or hitched to a wagon on the potluck day. In fact, Martha had told me how surprised she had been that on a client survey they had conducted, people mentioned “Caesar” the dog more than the horses. “Are they invisible to them?” she had asked me, puzzled.

As a member, it *is* possible to experience this farm as a kind of postcard scene where grazing horses or a passing team hitched to a wagon complete a rustic picture. One can drive in and drive out without knowing what’s happening in the barn, what’s happening in the field, what may have happened overnight. Adults and children may visit the horses in the barn or admire them across an electric fence but it is still possible to be

unaware of their contribution to the farm's workings or of the way that they are "essential, co-constitutive, actors" in what Riley calls a "farm-animal-farmer assemblage" (Riley 2011:17-18). Here, they are not part of a petting zoo, to be fed for a quarter, as are the ponies at a nearby garden centre. Yet even if the interaction with the horses is slight for clients who only come to the pick-up room, the horses are present in often unregistered ways: in a bridle hanging from a hook, in dung on the laneways, in the smells that are carried on the breeze, in the clank of Ken smithing a horseshoe in his shop, as part of the soil. And horses also infiltrate the micro as well as the macro levels of the farm; besides the horses' role in daily and seasonal tasks, the use of their composted manure directly connects them to the microscopic level of the farm's functioning, and through this to plant growth and the produce which consumers at Orchard Hill eventually take home with them.

While protecting the rare Suffolk breed is one facet of the farm, their role (and the respect and care they are shown) as collaborators in the project of "working with" is of much more concern to Ken and Martha as this blog entry (July 17, 2014) shows:

On the horse front, some of our most reliable horses for apprentices to drive have developed sore necks from too much time working. Well-trained Suffolk Punch horses are hard to come by... so we have welcomed two older reliable horses into the herd. Queen is a Belgian mare who blends in well. Ned makes me do a double take because he is a white Percheron gelding...The added horsepower has given our other horses some needed rest.

The place of the horses in day-to-day interconnections on the farm and even in the hour-by-hour workings of each day, is not to be underestimated. Martha will put up an announcement in the pick-up room when foals are born and people will be welcomed to admire, photograph and faun over the surprisingly large babies from behind the electric

fence. Sometimes they ask CSA members to leave suggestions for naming a new horse. This birth was celebrated on a blog entry (June 28, 2011): “Gena had a beautiful Suffolk Punch stud colt on Monday morning. We are all enjoying having a foal around again after a break of a few years. He seems healthy and strong. In the picture he is less than a day old and already “up and at ’em”!

Likewise, the death of a horse is marked and mourned with feeling. For example, this message about the mare above was posted on the farm blog by Martha in February of 2015:

Our sad news is that we lost our oldest Suffolk horse, Gena, this winter. She had been having difficulty with her back legs and sometimes had trouble getting up after she laid down. This time round we couldn't get her up again. I find the hardest thing about working with horses is not the chores or harnessing or training, it is the sadness when they die. Gena was born on our farm and was a hard and willing worker her whole life. She was always patient with our apprentices and draft horse workshop participants.

The healthy and “reliable” horses at Orchard Hill are clearly well-fed, well-housed, well-groomed, and a source of pride to the family. Something that stood out to me in all of my discussions and observations about the horses, with the apprentices, and with Ken and Martha, was the use of the phrase “working with the horses.” The phrase “working with” was almost always employed as opposed to ‘driving’ the horses or ‘working’ them. While they may be referred to as “modular power units” or even jokingly as “solar tractors”, horses here are recognized as living, co-working individuals with unique characters and personalities. For example, this same entry on the farm blog (July 17, 2014) acknowledges the new horse Ned’s temperament, experience, and quirks.

Ned is a sweet-natured horse and has become a star already because of his previous experience on a vegetable farm cultivating, spraying, and standing. (Some of our other horses take great exception to the smell of fish emulsion when it is being sprayed and caused a runaway, which thankfully

ended without disaster). Ned has a taste for all sorts of vegetables and enjoys nibbling on whatever is within reach.

Louise, an apprentice from Nebraska, had previous CSA experiences and a degree in sustainable agriculture but she had not worked with horses before her season at Orchard Hill. In her description of an incident that summer in which she had been seriously injured by a horse, animal “personalities” are highlighted.

Gwen and Sandy have a long-standing disagreement, you know, and we probably shouldn't have been harnessing them next to each other. But Sandy knew that I was there and she wasn't kicking at me, she was kicking at the other horse...If you're out in the paddock and there's a scuffle or one horse wants to discipline another one there might be a third horse that might be there, but they move themselves. I was in a space where –it all happened very fast –Sandy didn't see me as her leader. If I had interacted in a way that Sandy knew that I was the leader and that she was going to be disciplined if she tried anything, she wouldn't have kicked at Gwen when I was there. But she saw herself as higher than me in the hierarchy.

Although the Suffolk horses at Orchard Hill are domesticated and seemingly docile, they require much care and attention to perform tasks on the fields. Ploughing a straight furrow depends on well-trained horses (horses with a history) as well as on their relationships with other horses and the teamster. Jack told me they would try to “get away with sloppy rows” and that they must be controlled, cajoled, and teamed well because they are “always considering who they are working with”.

“If the horses aren't doing what you ask them to do it's not because they are bad horses, it's that you are not a good enough teamster and people can get really frustrated with them...”, Louise told me when describing her sense of frustration when the blades on a new horse-drawn mower kept getting gummed up.

You're doing very physical work. And farming with horses also requires an intense amount of mental and emotional focus because if you lose it, the horses know and that's when things can get really dangerous. And that's why I went into the outhouse, cried, pulled myself together, and got back to work.

She said all of the apprentices had cried at some point working with the horses. “It’s a huge learning curve and you’re constantly realizing that the learning curve is way bigger than you thought it was.”

The above citations by Jack and Louise direct our attention to the performance of a “dance of relating” (Haraway 2008) that this post-pastoral approach requires as people and animals learn from and adapt to one another in an ongoing process.

One afternoon as I was in the cutting garden, I had witnessed Martha and Anne, a former apprentice who was helping out that week, leap into action when Gena fell while harnessed to a wagon. Martha had seen the fall out of the kitchen window and immediately came running out to help untangle Gena and get her back on her feet. Between the two of them they accomplished this with much coaxing and skill, all the while keeping the other horse in the team calm. It was a side of Martha (and a demonstration of another area of competency) that I had rarely witnessed because I had more often seen Ken or the apprentices interacting with the horses, and while I had seen horses act impatiently or be sternly addressed by the team driver, I had not seen one stumble and fall.

The danger here has to do with the sheer size of these animals, remembering that a horse such as Gena may weigh 1500 lbs or more. The weight of their own bodies can prevent blood flow to certain areas and damage to tissues deprived of oxygen may occur when the animal tries to stand up and blood flow tries to normalize. This is called reperfusion or reoxygenation injury. Muscles and nerves can also sustain damage from excessive pressure or blood can pool in the ‘down’ side lung due to gravity. In short, the

sooner you can get the horse up, the better. On this occasion, Anne and Martha were both clearly relieved to have been able to get the beloved mare back on her feet, perhaps already knowing that she would be gone before very long.

Donna Haraway's *The Companion Species Manifesto* (2003) explores "the implosion of nature and culture in the relentlessly historically specific, joint lives of dogs and people, who are bonded in significant otherness." (16). Companion animals, she writes, can be "horses, dogs, cats, or a range of other beings willing to make the leap to the biosociality of service dogs, family members, or team members in cross-species sports" (14.) As she points out, these relationships have often allowed for the flourishing of those involved.

The most well-known breeds of draft horses, such as the Percheron and Clydesdale, are linked to the war horses of Medieval conflicts. Smaller in stature than these giant horses, the Suffolk Punch breed emerged in the 16th century from the geographically isolated Norfolk and Suffolk counties of eastern England. With marshes to the west and the North Sea in the other three directions, the physical isolation of the Suffolk area contributed to the consistency of the breed (Livestock Conservancy), and unlike other draft breeds, it was never selected for anything other than agricultural work. As a result the breed retains the characteristics it was originally valued for: "the strength and stamina to plow through heavy clay, hardiness, a willing disposition, and easy-keeping qualities" (Livestock Conservancy). Their rounded feet, free of long hair or "feathering", would have made it easier to work in the clay soils where the horse was developed (Suffolk Punch). To modern horse farmers such as Ken and Martha, the Suffolk's moderate size compared to that of the other draft breeds is an attractive

attribute. Another asset –their disposition– is elsewhere described:

The Suffolk is a horse of splendid disposition and easy temperament. He exhibits a ready willingness to work, great endurance, and the quality known as "Heart," the inner determination to push on. The Suffolk farmer referred to this quality when he said he valued the Suffolk as "a puller of dead weight and indeed a good drawer."

–International Museum of The Horse

First imported to Canada in 1865 and a decade and a half later to the U.S., Suffolk Punch horses were widely utilized in the Midwest, New England and Ontario, but after the Second World War the breed quickly declined in numbers and was near to global extinction in the 1950s. The breed is still endangered, but its numbers have increased since the 1970s, due to the efforts of a small number of breeders in England and North America, including Ken and Martha. As of 2016, the Rare Breeds Survival Trust, a charity organization which works to protect the United Kingdom's rare native breeds of farm animals from extinction, listed the Suffolk Punch situation as “critical”, based on the number of registered 100% ‘pure’ breeding females in the UK (300). They are also placed in the “critical” category by Rare Breeds Canada (listing less than 15 registered females) and the American Livestock Conservancy with less than 200 registered females and an estimated global population of less than 2,000 (Livestock Conservancy).

It is possible that the current growing interest in sustainable small farming may affect the fate of this branch of the family Equidae. The suitability of the Suffolk horses for the tasks they are trained to undertake in the widely variable weather in Southern Ontario is borne out by the almost four decades that they have been contributing to this farm.

While discussing the relationships with the horses, I had asked Louise, the

apprentice who had been seriously injured early in the summer season, “Are they in the same category as pets?” She paused in thought before answering.

It's pretty tricky because, you know, every horse person I've ever talked to to says don't treat your horse like a pet, because if you treat your horse like a pet, your horse is not gonna look to you as a leader and it's really important for your own safety and your horse's safety that they see you as their leader. That doesn't mean that you can't tell the horses “good job” or whatever. Those horses are very well-taken care of by Ken but, you know, Ken doesn't baby-talk to the horses, you know - I have been known to baby talk to horses- (she laughs) that's been sort of a harder lesson for me to learn. Yeah, really the sense of companionship...and I really love those horses - I mean, maybe not all of them but most of them...

This notion of companionship is what Donna Haraway, in her book *When Species Meet* (2008), has described as “situated naturecultures, in which all the actors become who they are in the dance of relating, not from scratch, not ex nihilo, but full of the patterns of their sometimes-joined, sometimes-separate heritages both before and lateral to this encounter” (25). The brief history of the Suffolk horse sketched above is, in this sense, an abstract account that leaves much of the entanglement of species out of the equation. The co-history of horses and humans is a particularly complex example of a productive but also troubled relationship: used for millennia as a tool –in war, in agriculture, in industry, etc.– the history of humans and horses includes the innumerable, and mostly untold, unique meetings of their “gazes” and all the relational aspects this implies. Where a human can express love for an animal, as Louise does above, it is because she understands that this is a relationship that goes both ways. The horse might be understood to need a measure of control (Louise expresses this in terms of mutual safety), but this is out of concern for herself and the “other,” the horse, that inhabit a shared world.

4.4 A Working Farm: Working with People and Adapting Tasks

For those whose interactions at the farm don't extend beyond picking up their vegetables after they are displayed, the picture they may form when they arrive at the farm does not necessarily include how those prop-like vegetables really appear, how they were grown, or the daily and seasonal work involved. As we have seen in Chapter 2, some of the consumers here are less cognizant of the 'post-pastoral' nature of the operation than of the seemingly pastoral, past-facing symbols and "rustic" signposts of "quality" and a "natural way of life" on display at Orchard Hill. (Recall the member who exclaimed the farm looked "just like 'Little House On the Prairie!'" and the member who liked "looking at the house or driving in and looking at the cow, or seeing a little bit of the chickens...") Paxson, again, points out that for people such as Martha and Ken,

...the garden of the artisan post-pastoral is neither wilderness nor country estate, but instead a working landscape. Urban and suburban migrants relocate to the countryside not merely to observe and contemplate the natural beauty of its landscapes, but to work and to steward the land (2013:17).

Behind the "backdrop" of barns and fields, lies the real working landscape, a complex, ongoing, labour-intensive project, which –as we have seen– begins with attention to soil health. Marla felt this was missing from many clients' understandings of the farm.

People see vegetables and they see everything out there [in the pick-up room] and everything's clean. Like, this young couple was out there, they were cleaning green onions –and it's super fiddly cleaning green onions - you know, we try and do it as fast as we can and it's very efficient but it's still –it takes a long time, especially when you're cleaning 950 green onions for a pick up. And they

were, like, “Wow, we just can’t believe how you guys do this!” And that’s the thing - everything is very...there’s a lot of thought that went into everything, there’s a lot of planning, there’s a lot of numbers behind everything, and I feel like a lot of people don’t see that...

While there is definitely much thought put into the science, planning and management of this CSA, the work itself by necessity remains flexible. “There’s really no typical day. The jobs are different every day.” Martha said when we were discussing work and how the year passes at the farm. Ken had worked on farms where “you could spend two weeks doing same thing every day” – there was so much acreage to cover– but “this is a relatively small diversified operation.”, he said. Martha continued, “We *do* know we will be harvesting twice a week for the CSA, so there is some rhyme to it, rain or shine.”

“When we go down to the field in the morning, we often don’t know what we will get - or if something is going to be ready - broccoli or beans - how it’s going to work out.” Martha told me. There is an advantage to having a wide variety of crops; “When something doesn’t work out, there is something else to step in. You haven’t got all your eggs in one basket.” she said. “And we do all we can. We’ve put money into irrigation and tile drains –we’ve done the things we can do. And we use our knowledge and our years of experience.” Problems can arise. “Along come army worms and we have to re-plant the corn – but has anyone really noticed? It would have been harder for others [less diversified farms] to deal with.” (I observed these army worms (*Mythimna unipuncta*, a caterpillar of the army moth), living up to their name, as they “marched” in a line all the way down the edge of the gravel lane to the corn field – an incredible sight that summer, where they competed with racoons and deer for the spoils.) While the planting is carefully planned, rainfall, temperatures, insects, animals, and the varying parameters of

the seasons themselves are part of a fluctuating process.

On the level of human labour, there is a need for flexibility and open-ness to the processes involved in growing food. However, while there are many things that may need to happen across the farm in any twenty-four hour period, from fence repairs to updating the farm blog, there is a general shape to the day during the apprentice season from March to October.

At six in the morning, while many CSA members are probably still sleeping, people at Orchard Hill are waking up. After years of working with teams of apprentices, an efficient system has been worked out. Four apprentices are assigned four different morning chores on a weekly rotation and by 6:30 am the day's work has begun. While breakfast is being prepared by the person on breakfast duty, the person on chickens lets them out of their protected night shelter, feeds them, gets them water. Another person cleans stalls and feeds the horses, working in the barn with the person assigned to do harnessing. This person gets the horses in from the pasture, leads them into the barn for brushing and harnessing, and gets them ready for working. (These morning chores are generally the same all through the year, except that in colder weather the horses spend nights in the barn and days out in the paddock.)

The chores take until about 7:15 am, when breakfast is served around the big table in the kitchen next to the wood-burning cookstove. Beside the kitchen table is a whiteboard sometimes used for the morning discussion of the needs and goals for that day. One day that I was there, it had three column headings that indicated the priority status of a task: "*Today*", "*Possibly*", and "*Maybe Never*". Beside it hung a hand-drawn map of the fields and their crop assignments.

Many people would find breakfast here extraordinary, as I did one morning when I arrived early for a CRAFT day trip with them. I was invited to share their usual fare - fresh eggs and dairy, home baked bread (made with grains grown and ground on the farm), fruit, and homemade preserves. “It’s a very good breakfast.” Louise told me, “Always eggs, coffee, toast, and usually also oatmeal or pancakes. The quality of living is very high. Even if our pay isn’t high, the quality of the food and of where we live is very high.” During the previous season, Marla had also spoken to me about the quality of the “room and board”:

I’m a very privileged migrant worker. I’m here on a work visa – yeah, I’m migrant labour, I’m from out of the country, I’m not a citizen and I’m working on a farm – my visa says Migrant Farm Worker from the United States and I had to go through a big process, but I guess it’s not like your typical migrant worker...

Martha told me that, when deciding on apprentice applicants, they pre-selected people they felt may end up farming, often but not always through the CRAFT network. “They are engaged in a way, because it’s something they really want to do, they’re already more involved and motivated. That’s beneficial and stimulating for us, too.” It doesn’t always work out, they acknowledged. In fact, fairly early in that same season, one apprentice had decided farming was not for him. “When that happens” Ken said, “they leave by mutual consent.” After all, it is a very big commitment of time with a stipend that is, according to Ken, “not that much.” Most often, though, the apprentices who had come to work –over fifty by 2016– had stayed and been a benefit to the farm. “It’s a place for them to learn and we need the help as we get older.” Ken said.

Jack had also contrasted their experience with other temporary farm workers in the region:

I'm not sure exactly what sort of situation migrant workers around here have on the farms, but here at Orchard Hill farm with the other apprentices –we share that bunkhouse and we all eat together –breakfast lunch and dinner – we work together –so it's a family situation, right? So, all of those little family type of situations come up at some point - that's just how it is - like at the end of the season- part way through the season you know where people's buttons are, you know, it's like brother and sister...

And although living, eating, and working together may be part of a migrant worker's experience as well, here the employers saw and treated the apprentices as more than labour, which is not always the case with foreign agricultural workers in the area (Basok 2002:19). "It is like family, in a way. You live and work together and you develop relationships with them. We care, we keep in touch, too.", Martha said. Marla, who had experience at multiple farms, said that she felt at home here:

This place is the place I felt happiest and I guess, yeah, the happiest and most involved with. They're willing to take us on as, like, their kids and nurture us along, even after we leave. Like, they take care of their people and its so nice.

At the two CRAFT day workshops I attended, people spoke highly of Ken and Martha. "We're some of the more experienced and we're seen as having a successful operation," Martha said modestly when I mentioned this. The farm's connection to the CRAFT network was a benefit for the farm and for the apprentices, she said. It connected them with a social group of other young farm interns and often to another apprenticeship that helped to "round out their experience". Several apprentices, while not complaining, told me they had not worked as hard on other farms as they had here.

The field work will start by 8:00 am, and sometimes earlier on harvest days. Morning work could mean going down to the fields to do weeding, especially in the spring when there will be a lot of weeding to do. It could mean weeding a side garden or seeding beds or working in the greenhouse doing seeding or mixing of organic potting

soil in large bins. Or it could mean hitching a horse to a wagon and going down to the field to harvest until noon, especially with certain crops like lettuces which need to be harvested before it gets too hot.

Some days this will involve workshare members who come for their two and a half hour time slot which they had signed up for on a calendar in the pick-up room. I asked Jack if they really needed the help of the working share members because, to an outsider, they usually appeared to have things well in hand. As a workshare member, the work never felt hurried. “Yeah, we do have it under control.” he said.

We could do it all, but we're happy to get it done in half of the time. That's the thing about farming; when something takes longer to do, everything else gets pushed back - things don't pause growing so you can do repairs and general maintenance. It's good to have the working shares. Yeah, the working shares help a lot. And it gets them out there next to us because we can't always hang out in the pick-up room.

Lunch is usually from noon to 1:00, depending on when the morning work wraps up. “We have an hour for lunch and that means half an hour of shoving all the food into our mouths as fast as we can so that we can have a half hour nap - yes, nap is a very important part of it.” Louise told me, laughing. “When I first got here, we were splitting firewood for, like, the first two weeks in the freezing cold. So, yeah, like, naps, eat a bunch of food and try to get warm for half an hour.”

After this lunch break, work continues until 5:00 or 5:30, perhaps discing fields with horses or cutting hay, all depending on the needs of the day. For Ken, an early spring day may involve skidding logs from the woods with the horses. Martha will seed greens for the first May pick-ups in early March in the greenhouse, perhaps under a roof heavy with snow. As soon as it is warm enough, the hoophouses will be set up in the fields and

planted with cold-season crops such as pak choi. Early summer work will include getting the more tender transplants into the fields and getting the first cut of hay into the barn. Midsummer jobs include “taking off” the spelt and the straw, harvesting and hanging garlic to dry, a second cutting of hay, and managing crops such as field and greenhouse tomatoes, sweet corn, and early potatoes. In late summer, there will be melons, beans, and sweet peppers to harvest, bending of the onion tops in the field to begin the curing process, more potatoes to dig, management of cover crops, and seeding and planting of some of the fall season crops.

Again, depending on the day, there could be several members to help. Caesar, the dog, loves to ride down to the field on the wagon with workers. Because the afternoon workshares are timed to happen on the day before a pick-up, the tasks will involve harvesting, counting, cleaning, and storing produce that keeps well (such as peppers or cabbages). The more perishable items (such as herbs and greens) will still be gathered early on the morning clients will be coming.

The apprentices all undertake their own personal learning projects during their tenure at the farm. For instance, Danielle, an apprentice from Quebec who stayed for two seasons, worked with a dairy cow to learn about yogourt and cheesemaking, and Marla was working at blacksmithing with the coal forge. There will usually be time for their projects in a day. Even Martha is amazed at all that goes on: “Sometimes I feel like I need to just run around with a camera all day taking pictures of all the different activities that are taking place simultaneously.”

End of day chores for the apprentices reflect their weekly morning assignment again: the person on chickens collects the eggs, washes them, and puts them in the walk-

in cooler. The person on feeding the horses has to feed them again. The person who was on harnessing, un-harnesses the horses and the person on breakfast pitches in as needed.

Dinner is at 6:00 and everyone including Ken and Martha have their day to cook, utilizing the fruits of all the labour that has been expended. The seasonal recipes often end up on the farm blog. If you are on dinner you do the dishes throughout the day and stop work at 4:00 to prepare the meal for everyone. While the apprentices are usually outside all day, Ken and Martha often have other things to take care of in the office or shop but they still do hard physical work most days, including Martha's breadmaking and preserving, and Ken's welding work. Ken also often returns to the field after dinner and works until dark. Louise told me: "Especially during the haying season, the hay comes in whenever the hay is ready to come in, so there are times we work till 9:00 pm bringing the hay in because you don't want it to get rained on..." Looking back from the vantage point of autumn, she wondered how farmers had "a family or any kind of social life during the growing season". She realized she had only wanted to sleep and she was still recovering from the exhaustion.

As the apprentices move on in the fall, usually by (Canadian) Thanksgiving, preparations for winter and the following season continue for Martha and Ken with activities such as mulching strawberries with hay, mowing off the ferny asparagus tops, and removing plastic from greenhouses to keep the snow load from ruining the hoops. And although Martha said that in the winters they have "time to re-group" without apprentices in their home, the work doesn't stop. For one thing, there is the continued care of the horses and animals that begins and ends each day. Ken and Martha might get away for a weekend or week if they arrange someone capable to "farmsit". The year that I

spoke with Jack, he was planning to stay on at the farm through the winter in a mutually beneficial arrangement that would help him get his own projects off the ground.

There will still be things to do like the roof of that barn and the workshop there. The roofing material is secured with nails; they need to come out and be replaced with screws 'cause they're a little leaky and Ken is storing his wood in the old barn now, so...need to do that. There'll be some logging to do and sawmilling some of the logs that are there, the cow to milk...there'll be things, there'll be things, yeah...busy, just a little more indoor work, the shop work and things like that.

Ken and Martha spoke proudly of the apprentices who spent time with them and are now passing on something of what they learned at Orchard Hill. Off the top of his head, Ken listed sixteen that they knew were currently farming –of almost fifty who had interned on the farm up to that point: “...of course, Ava, in Japan. Jessica, in France. Andy in New Zealand. Tobias in Germany.” Isabel was returning that fall to Chile with hopes of farming. Many were in Canada and the United States. Martha also recounted that they had recently visited the successful farm operation of two former Orchard Hill CSA members who had quit their jobs, bought land in Prince Edward Island, and begun their own organic CSA.

All of the above discussions point to ways that Martha and Ken have opened up the boundaries of their farm and home and *worked with* soil, animals, and people in a post-pastoral project that contrasts with industrial agriculture endeavours. The thoroughness with which Ken describes how the soil works, and his advocacy for horse-powered and no-till farming as logical methods to keep it alive (and to combat global warming) shows how deeply committed he is to an agricultural practice that he considers “stewardship” of the land and the environment. In thinking about soil, Ken is thinking from his embodied experience on the farm conveying the wonder, and enchantment, that

such a close connection to land can elicit. Soil is not just a “local” matter, as Ken makes clear, since scaling up his vision of care would have positive global consequences.

What geographer Agatha Herman (2015) calls the “enchantment” of farming is clearly evident in how Ken talks about soil, but it also underlies the experiences and connections between farmers, apprentices, and non-human animals here. Jack had told me that, for him, farming was not merely a “lifestyle”. “You can’t take it off,” he said.

We have seen how actors here describe the farm as an effective enterprise because of its “enchantment,” as Herman has used the term to describe people-place relationships on farms (2015). Herman borrows the notion of enchantment from political and cultural theorist Jane Bennett, who describes enchantment as an embodied experience of both “strangeness and familiarity” that stimulates moments of openness and wonder about the world we inhabit (qtd. in Herman, 105). These moments are not exclusive to agricultural sites such as Orchard Hill –Herman cautions against this, suggesting that even “industrial agricultural landscapes” have the potential to enchant (110). Crucially, enchantment for Bennet, “opens up complex moral economies through a host of care relations for the self, family, land, soil, plants, animals, buildings, technologies, colleagues and consumers and acts to strengthen the relationship between the farmer and the place of the farm” (109). This is another way to describe what I have been calling “working with”.

Again, here I distinguish between a more pastoral sense of “re-enchantment” linked to the past and a post-pastoral sense of “enchantment” that is more pragmatic and future-oriented. While a sense of “re-enchantment” experienced by consumers makes this project economically viable, importantly, it is also a sense of “enchantment” that keeps the farmers engaged in their wider, long-term goals of responsible farm stewardship for

the future. This sense of “enchantment” has spurred Martha and Ken to educate new farmers and consumers, and aid young farmers in pursuing their own ambitions. While their clients recognized that experiences at the farm could be “more than shopping”, Martha and Ken also recognized that their project extends beyond selling food for profit and, physically, far beyond this plot of land. “Our little farm here is having it’s impact in it’s own little way” Martha acknowledged.

Chapter 5

“Love in A Tomato”

5.1 Taking Responsibility For What Happens

This final chapter begins with a description of a visit to the Sparta Meeting House, an important site for understanding Martha and Ken’s motivations for operating Orchard Hill Farm in the way that they do. I will end by discussing some challenges, observations and conclusions relating this very unique expression of the CSA model.

One Sunday morning in July, I turn off the paved, two lane Quaker Rd. and pull the car up on the grass outside the Sparta Meeting House. There are already several cars parked on the grass beside the U-shaped gravel drive. Two men are talking on the porch where several narrow benches sit under a series of 12-pane windows. There are two front entrances to the building and the double doors on the left are thrown open. It is going to be a hot day but just before 11:00 in the morning it is still pleasant here under aging maples.

Helen, a CSA member who is part of the Sparta Quaker membership, arrives in her older model Volvo and I help her carry several boxes of papers from her car to the porch. “Minutes,” she explains. I happen to have come on a day when there will be a member’s only business meeting afterwards. “You should come on a Sunday at the first

of the month –there’s always a potluck on those days,” she tells me.

By this time, the two men have gone inside and I follow Helen through the doors. A half dozen casually dressed people are sitting quietly. I pick up a pamphlet from a small table by the door. It serves as an introduction to visitors:

We are members of the Society of Friends and we like to be known as Friends. Our life and practice is a conviction, that there is something of God’s Spirit in us all, that every soul can have immediate communion with Him. We want to worship simply, by excluding anything that for us would be insincere.

Helen takes a seat without greeting anyone and I step up into the back row behind her. In a room with a high sloped ceiling and uncarpeted plank floors, there are simply made grey-painted benches set on a descending series of low risers and padded with grey cushions. At the end of each row, plastic ring-bound songbooks are stacked neatly. A slightly damp smell reminds me that the building has been standing for a century and a half. Except for white window and door trim, everything is painted a bluish grey, even the box filled with firewood that sits beside the wood stove. Because I have been here before for a “100-Mile Dinner” fundraiser, I realize that a moveable divider wall has been extended to cut the space in half. Unlike the set-up at the dinner, today there are no long tables, and the benches are assembled in rows in a square-ish horseshoe facing the woodstove on the left. (The benches are obviously easily moved and stacked and would not be confused with the heavy, polished pews found in many churches. The flexibility of the space draws attention to the importance and frequency of sharing food here.) An aisle leads from the door we entered to a small, bare table set in the empty space in front of the stove. Electric lights with grey hoods hang from the ceiling but on this sunny morning tree-filtered light comes in from the east and south windows. The outer storm windows

are in place but, with the doors open, the room is airy and cool.

Others arrive in cars at intervals and come in without speaking or acknowledging one another. The meeting start time appears to be quite flexible—that is, whenever you get there— but people settle in quickly once they arrive. There are no children among the nineteen people who gather that day. Some bow their heads, some just sit quietly, looking ahead. I quickly wish I could stretch my legs out more.

Long after I think anyone else will be coming in, we hear the other entrance doors open, footsteps on the other side of the partition, then the creaking of pipes and water running. Footsteps and the doors again. A young man in shorts and t-shirt appears. He wears sunglasses on the top of his head, and is carrying a water bottle and a blue plastic cup. In the cup are a handful of grasses and white-flowered Queen Anne's Lace, (*Daucus carota*, a European flowering plant naturalized in North America) accompanied by some more flies that trail in with them. He places the cup of “weeds” on the table top. (I had been wondering if a Bible would get placed there at some point. But then, what could be less “insincere” and more to-the-point than a rough handful of the season's offerings?) The young man sits and the silence— or at least the lack of speaking— continues. After some minutes a bearded man removes his wide-brimmed leather hat and stands. He takes a folded paper from his pocket, clears his throat, and reads a short paragraph about people gathering in a spirit of love and truth that “transcends ordinary experience”. He sits back down and then there is a long period of silence punctuated by coughs and people shifting on the benches. I become aware of the flies buzzing, the surprisingly constant stream of cars passing on the road, the birds outside, and the laboured breathing of some of the older attendees.

At some point a white-haired woman rises from her seat. I hadn't noticed her come in but now realize it is Martha's mother whom I have met before at the farmhouse. She speaks briefly in the relaxed but strong voice of someone used to speaking publicly. She has been thinking, she says, about her definition of "sin" and urges everyone there to do the same. She has come to the conclusion that sin is "anything that separates us from the Eternal or from others." She ends by saying that God is everywhere and in everything and sits down again.

Although it has been broken into for a moment, the quietness continues. I find myself looking at the three identical glass vases in the three south windows. Each contain a single arching Queen Anne's Lace flower in water. I imagine the same vases with sprigs of evergreens and contemplate how cold the Meeting House would be on an icy morning in January.

Eventually, the young man who brought in the flowers stands up and says "We're going to sing a song now." He indicates which booklet to use. It is #222, Joni Mitchell's 1970 song, "The Circle Game". Everyone stands and they sing all three verses and choruses without accompaniment or leader.

*And the seasons they go 'round and 'round
 And the painted ponies go up and down
 We're captive on the carousel of time
 We can't return we can only look behind
 From where we came
 And go round and round and round
 In the circle game*

After the singing finishes, the bearded man turns and shakes hands with me and this seems to signal that the meeting is over. People begin to greet each other and a number of them welcome me to the Meeting. A man announces that he has a picture book of the song if anyone wants to look at it. As a few people take their leave and others get ready for the business meeting, I overhear some people talking about the song and how time seems to drag or flee depending on your age. Before I make my departure, I walk over to a bulletin board and take in the Thank You cards, newsletters, and messages from the wider Society of Friends network. There is a sheet describing the philosophy of the Friends that reminds people that “Everyone takes responsibility for what happens at a meeting.”

If Martha and Ken’s approach to farming and the environment is considered in this light, their farm could be understood as a manifestation of their daily and serious attempt to take personal responsibility for their impact on the earth and among people they interact with, an extension of the Friends’ cosmological view which locates the sacred in “everything”. When I had asked them if they felt that their work was also linked to their long connection to the Sparta Friends Meeting, Ken and Martha had both agreed. “It’s very much based on our core of basic beliefs and our spirituality. The whole farm and what we do is an outgrowth of that,” Martha said. “ ‘Let your lives speak’ ...So, there you go!”

In this respect, Orchard Hill Farm is clearly not only their work but a daily spiritual exercise, the one enriching the other. “It’s like *love in a tomato* or something like

that,” CSA member Susan had told me as we sat on the grass outside the Meeting House earlier that summer. In a quote which I used earlier (see Ch. 2, page 75), she had expressed that she felt that farming was definitely a “spiritual experience for Ken and Martha”. As a fellow member of the Sparta Meeting of Friends, Susan also connected her own involvement at the farm with her own values. “I’m responsible for my own actions and how I affect other people, and if I can get my family and my kids to eat local, I think that keeps me in line with my values.”

In considering my experience at the Meeting, I remembered that Jack had told me about a member who had come down to the field for a workshare one morning and asked why they were there because she didn’t see anything. “And then we filled the wagon with stuff”, he laughed.

Yeah, always somethin’ there - and it all has a purpose, too. Like, you’ll see a field of clover there and nothing’s happening there, but the clover is there to provide a cover and to provide organic matter and to fix some nitrogen for what’s planning to go there next year.

Like the farm, which may at times appear peaceful and inactive to visitors, the meeting left the initial impression that nothing had really “happened”. People mostly just sat quietly. Together. No collection of money, no public prayers or speech beyond a few thoughtful sentences. And yet —again with parallels to the farm— I had to ponder what the effects of these silent gatherings might be, both immediately and over time.

5.2 Challenges, Observations, and Conclusions

Community Supported Agriculture is not a substitute for industrial farming, and it is not conceptualized in this manner by those who become CSA members or owners.

Smaller, family owned grocery stores, farmer's markets, and even larger supermarkets have, to one degree or another adopted hybrid strategies to accommodate a consumer desire for “better” food. CSAs are a complementary alternative to industrial production and consumption, and a variety of other hybrid alternatives that are available. Forming a CSA is only one option for local farmers to get their goods “to market”. Ultimately, a CSA farm such as Orchard Hill not only provides an option for farmers and for consumers looking for better food, but serves as an example that may contribute to changes in how industrial food producers operate. In this way, CSA farms assert their influence beyond the locality.

Throughout this thesis it has been apparent that the way food is produced at Orchard Hill is seen as beneficial, both by those who farm and by those who make up the CSA membership. In a sense, it is an operation that seems to “tick off” many current concerns surrounding food: Orchard Hill strives to produce organic food of high quality, and to market it to a local or regional clientele that can access the farm; Martha and Ken are concerned about sustainability, about preserving small-scale farming (and food sovereignty), and about behaving ethically and conscientiously with respect to other people, non-human animals, and the environment. There are, however, a few challenges that deserve further scrutiny and that might call into question the viability (financially, logistically, and in other ways) of agricultural approaches such as the one practiced at Orchard Hill. The following are brief summaries of a few of the issues that I found, all of which raise questions for further study in similar settings.

Some of these challenges are related to the commercialization of products from the farm. To begin with, to get to Orchard Hill one generally needs to have a car. Most

members do not live within a reasonable walking or biking distance of the farm, so while the farm itself drastically reduces its use of fossil fuels through the use of horsepower, success depends on clients travelling to the farm. This also leads us to the question of access; people not only need transportation to reach the farm (and the luxury of time to make the trip), they need to have the funds to pay for food ahead of time, or at least the financial stability to write post-dated cheques. The demographics of the CSA membership consists overwhelmingly of working or retired people with steady incomes and choice in their grocery options. Inevitably, if not intentionally, people who may share similar goals but who do not possess the resources necessary to participate, will be excluded from such a project. Jack, the apprentice, recognized this as an “issue” with the farm: “It’s a tricky thing because it’s tempting to want to try and solve all the world’s problems but it’s enough of a challenge just to kind of get the farm work done from day to day...”

Marla and other apprentices had spoken of the challenge of people taking too much when the shares had been carefully planned. “At a farmers market – I see you taking three pumpkins, I’m like, you owe me for those three pumpkins, that’s stealing. At a CSA, I don’t know, do I approach you? What do I do?” She didn’t have a framework, she said, for confronting people about this in this setting where trust was such a large aspect of the interactions.

Martha and the apprentices had also expressed frustration with people who came early or on wrong pick-up day, expecting the setting to be like grocery store where there is an almost constant readiness to serve and a steady availability of produce. Another problem that sometimes arose was people not showing up for their workshare time when they had signed up, or some workshare members who left their commitment until

October when there were few times left to sign up for. These were not huge problems for Martha but little glitches in functioning that, once again, called upon her sense of flexibility.

The lack of certainty that is part of the farming process at Orchard Hill did not suit one member that I spoke with. Although Heidi said she was drawn to the CSA by a desire to eat “healthier”, organic food, she found the constant availability of produce in the supermarket and places like Costco where she regularly shopped –the consumer manifestation of ‘big ag’– a better fit for her family. She and her husband stayed with the farm for only one season, though she thought the produce was of excellent quality and she liked Ken and Martha. Besides being ‘usually too busy to get there’ for the pick-ups, (despite living in the immediate area) she wanted to know ahead of time what she was getting and, in particular, wanted items like spinach *every* week, not only when it was in season (that is, in the cooler months). Martha explained that although they had never had to “go out and buy” produce for the CSA and they were “not funnelling anything off for farmers’ markets”, there was a need for clients to maintain an open mind each week. This does not suit all consumers, of course.

There are also problems related to the production of organic goods within an overwhelmingly non-organic farming context. Proximity to conventional pesticides and herbicides through ground and aerial spraying draws attention in another, less positive way, to the idea that the farm’s boundaries are permeable. “You’re out in the field and you’re harvesting and then all of a sudden- what is that plane that’s flying next door? And they’re spraying...” Marla, the apprentice had said. In a related concern, Ken had told me that, as the organic sector expanded in Ontario and supply chains were stretched, there

were provincial plans to make manure of non-organically raised horses allowable in certified organic farming. This was aimed at accommodating growing business concerns, and was a change which he did not support.

I will also comment here on the exceptionality of Orchard Hill Farm and what is obviously not replicable about this case: Ken and Martha themselves, the two driving forces behind this CSA who have committed to working with their land, with their animal companions, with the community of members, and with the young people they train and host. The strength of this CSA (members' respect for and connection with Ken and Martha) is also its weakness. The limits of human capacity (i.e. working lifespan) make continuity a problem in this particular case, although it is clear that both Ken and Martha have endeavoured to pass on their knowledge and insight to another generation of farmers and to their own children. Although at Orchard Hill a family member has taken up the business (see Epilogue), other CSAs might have a harder time creating continuity once their owners begin to retire.

As we have seen in Chapter 1, the problem of succession is shared by many farmers in Ontario. Indeed, this and other problems faced by farmers in Ontario which were discussed earlier – for example, rising land prices, the high cost of agricultural inputs, the need for off-farm employment – are not necessarily solved by operating a CSA. However, this particular case shows that such an approach can open up possibilities for reduced input costs and a comfortable – if hard-working– living without supplementation with off-farm work. Although not everyone might be willing to sustain the same level of physical labour and commitment involved in working with horses and interacting with other people on their farm, Orchard Hill provides an alternative model

for small-scale farms that want to remain productive and profitable. The steady clientele over many years at this farm and the current appetite for organic and local food products suggests that there is ample demand to sustain the creation of more CSA farms in the area.

We cherish a good tomato, a good potato, a good meal –especially when we know where the food came from and who produced it. This is, in essence, the premise behind Orchard Hill as a Community Supported Agriculture farm. As we have seen throughout this dissertation, the desire for “good food” may be what drives people to join Orchard Hill, but the produce people receive is not the whole story: there are aspects of the farm and its location that spur consumers to become members here. In other words, whether Orchard Hill, as a place, is understood by one or another member as “rustic” or “pastoral”, or as a site where people “work with” (soil, animals, other people, and what the day-to-day brings), this particular farm is not “merely” about food. The people who choose to participate in this CSA have a variety of expectations and goals that do not necessarily coincide with those of Martha, Ken, and the apprentices. However, the farm's size, the closeness to food and its sources, and the human and non-human activity needed to produce it, create possibilities for what I have been calling “enchantment” and “re-enchantment.” I have argued that, although both of these are fostered by a sense of wonder, the former is pragmatic and future-oriented, while the latter looks more to the past for a source of meaning. This is more than a subtle distinction, because if alternative agriculture is to lead to a more “civic agriculture”, in Lyson's sense, then what is needed is a commitment beyond the “mere” pleasures of an idealized experience of the farm.

Ken and Martha, like many other farmers exploring alternative methods of agriculture, are committed to making the farm work. Community Supported Agriculture, as a model, gives members the opportunity to do the same. Therefore, although “re-enchantment” and “enchantment” are both connected to wonder, a shift from the former to the latter implies a change from merely picking up your produce at Orchard Hill, to understanding this farm's role in promoting civic agriculture.

The success of this CSA depends on a vision of an intertwined, dynamic, breathing whole that draws from the past even as it prepares for the future. This post-pastoral approach is a feature of this CSA that can provide inspiration for those interested in imagining alternatives to conventional agriculture. While notions of size and scale add a valued feeling of “closeness” for CSA members, it is also precisely the manageable scale of this farm that makes it possible for the farmers to work with permeable boundaries and to be conscious of the connections at many levels that come together to produce quality food, space for community, and a good way of life for the farmers and their animals.

For clients at Orchard Hill, the craftsmanship on display is emblematic of quality and of non-alienated labour; even the variability of the produce they receive signifies authenticity and connection to source and to craft. For Ken and Martha, this craftsmanship is forward-looking and post-Industrial Agriculture: it is an alternative way of producing food that is open to human and non-human variables that are part of their “craft” of growing good food, responsibly. Theirs is an approach that is open not only to the elements but to outsiders, and to this so-called 'enchantment' –in a way that industrial agriculture is perceived *not to be*, as it seeks to harness, and exploit, and increase

productivity and yields by dominating and obliterating resistance. In providing a product that seems to fulfill the criteria of being healthy, fresh, and environmentally sound, CSAs contribute, I suggest, to conversations about our food, the environmental and labour practices involved in its cultivation, and the distances it travels to arrive at our tables.

One way to summarize what I believe the farm offers the producers and consumers at Orchard Hill would be to draw again on Heather Paxson's description of how artisanal cheese producers thought of their craft: as working *with* nature, rather than *against* it. Although the farmers' perceptions and the clients' perceptions that I have discussed here may at times seem contradictory, I suggest that a common ground for both clients and consumers can be found in that they both see Orchard Hill precisely as a farm that works *with* nature, even if many of the clients aren't aware of just how deeply this practice extends here. The interdependency and closeness that connect food, farmer and farm here sets up the possibility for the wonder and the "enchantment" or "re-enchantment" experienced by Ken and Martha and by many of the consumers and apprentices I worked with. While this intimacy and connectedness does not guarantee that every client will experience the farm in this way, at a minimum, it does set the stage for people to become attuned to the idea of a "civic"-minded agriculture in which there is a commitment to "an economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable system of food production" (Lyson 2004:63-63).

I do know that in a certain way Martha and Ken entered our home, not just our kitchen, with their garden project. The food brought from the farm, prepared, consumed and shared, will always be intertwined with memories of both special occasions and everyday occurrences. I realize that we have come to look forward to spring salads,

richly-coloured summer peppers, roasted root vegetables in fall, unusual squashes into the cold months--- smells and colours and textures that followed us through the seasons, indeed, announced the seasons to us. With our membership in the CSA came a gradual awareness of early and late frosts, of rains and dryness, and of what can be expected from the earth and from someone's planning and hard work. And cooking seasonally became a matter of practicality in our house, not merely a cooking show talking point or cookbook-selling trend. The fridge must be emptied, the beets used up before they soften, the greens before they wilt. Make room for what is coming next week. We learned to appreciate beautifully formed and 'imperfect' produce, and all that led up to its appearance on our plate. We are not appalled or disgusted or "freaked out" when we find an overlooked grasshopper in our salad, or an earwig buried in the corn's husk. Food grows. Often outside. We learned about amazing processes, worthy of our attention and respect.

We have been among a relatively small and privileged group of people who have been touched by Martha and Ken's active philosophy. They have shared "their" land, their labour, their expertise, and their "bounty". They have contributed to our well-being while we have contributed to theirs. We journeyed through seasons and years, along with animals that sustained and were themselves sustained by the farm, along with apprentices who came and moved on, along with Ken and Martha's children who left and returned to become re-engaged in something that had grown beyond their house and farm.

I have argued here that both producers and consumers at Orchard Hill Farm are seeking more than material exchange and more than a lack of pesticides. I'll go so far as to say that they are all seeking a close connection to food and how it grows, or as the client quoted earlier phrased it, seeking that "Love in a tomato."

Epilogue

*“Let's go to Sparta
We'll find a friend there
And they say the good times never have to end there...”*

—Jennifer Castle, lyrics, “Let's Go To Sparta”

An article (Judkis 2017) catches my attention: Computer-driven hydroponic, ‘local’, organic farms in solar-powered, stackable shipping containers. Each unit is capable of the annual yields of several acres of farmland but grown twice as fast and with 97% less water. In terms of flexibility and scalability, there is enormous potential. The units could be dropped into urban ‘food deserts’, remote Northern locations or even disaster situations, and begin producing in as little as four weeks. Aerospace manufacturers are already involved in their development. The company calls itself “Local Roots”; their chief executive is quoted in the article: “The opportunities are global and intergalactic at the same time.”

As in the universe of food production, changes have come to the farm. Ken had warned me one afternoon that he and Martha were thinking of retiring. “It's all great but the CSA is getting to be too tiring” he had said to me, “especially in the spring when there is so much work to do.” Although he looked healthy and fit, I realized they were in their early sixties and the work they do is certainly physically taxing, even with steady help.

Martha and Ken did finally ‘semi-retire’ and their daughter has returned with her

husband and two small children to manage the CSA and the intern program. Martha and Ken have moved into the newly-renovated 'bunkhouse' and the house is now the domain of their daughter, Ellen, and her young family. Ellen has no small experience in the food industry, including a hand in a cookbook released by James Beard award-winning chef Naomi Pomeroy, with whom she worked at the restaurant *Beast* in Portland, Oregon. Ellen has plans for ticketed 50 person 'farm dinners', (a popular trend currently) and has organized kombucha tutorials and an Orchard Hill Spring Fair. She has taken over the farm blog, writing with excitement about the day-to-day workings of the farm, cooking with its offerings, and the 'joy' of raising children on a piece of land where their grandmother and great-grandmother also live. There is a new link to Martha's 'Tweets'. "It's a powerful thing to have a connection & relationship with the land and the people that are growing your food.", the newly polished website states. "We're in this business to foster a diverse community of people interested in a healthy, tasty lifestyle." The membership fee has risen to \$800 for the 22 week 2017 season, still a good deal if you think about it in weekly increments.

But as early asparagus from Mexico appeared in the grocery stores, I found myself eyeing my little garden under the snow in the backyard and wondering how much I could produce for our table if I really rolled up my sleeves and got to work, drawing on all that I have learned at Orchard Hill Farm. It was time to find out.

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